

WIRE

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THE WIRE ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

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When the going gets weird

Phil Minton

Asian Dub Foundation

An abuser's guide to Noise

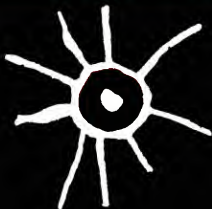
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Hang On The Box



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The Masthead

"An unfortunate elitism places song at the periphery of music's artistry," writes *Wire* contributor Philip Brophy in the introduction to his book *200 Modern Soundtracks* (BFI Publishing, reviewed by Ken Hollings in Print Run), "as if song's ephemeral, transitory and disposable nature discounts meaning, significance or statement." Sody Philip's book was published a few months too late for this part of the introductory argument to have been incorporated in *The Wire's* recent cover feature on the State Of Song issue (243), but his contention about the song's social ranking set me thinking that maybe something of the snobbery he's alluding to is what prevented me picking up on Yankee Hotel Foxtrot by this month's cover stars Wilco (see Edwin Pouncey's story on page 30) when it was first released in 2002.

In his disquisition on song and cinema (please note that I'm quoting from just one and a half pages from Brophy's book – the rest of it is just as engaging, occasionally infuriating and never less than stimulating), Philip goes on to chastise film aesthetes for their failure to recognise song as fabric rather than form. He writes, "Its patterning is the result of complex macro-structural activity, whereas overall effect arises from a less discernible organisation of

collective energies."

Whatever Philip's specific meaning in relation to his film argument, his definition of the fabric of song perfectly applies to Yankee Hotel Foxtrot. Even so, it was the two extended "experimental" tracks, the loopy, Knutrock-driven "Spiders (Kidsmoke)" and the slowly mistmooding drone piece "Less Than You Think", on their latest album *A Ghost Is Born*, that prompted *The Wire* to listen more closely to a group that I for one still had pegged as an all-country outfit, long after they had evolved into something altogether more sonically fascinating. Yankee Hotel Foxtrot finds the group constructing rock songs from myriad electronic textures and threads, in collaboration with Wilco mannan Jeff Tweedy's friend Jim O'Rourke. (Together with present Wilco drummer Glenn Kotche, the pair also play out in the occasional trio Loose Far.)

Back to the beginning of his anti-elitist argument, Philip writes, "Opera is allowed song – but via the pure and controlled streaming of known mythological shapes through dramatic exposition. The 'phantom voice' of the libretto is replicated in the bulging diaphragms of its singers whose contralto implies that the purity of their un-breathed tone allows 'pure'

musical narrative form to be articulated spiritually."

Put another way, your average diva's loosey diction helps opera lovers sustain the illusion that the hours of lurid exposition they're being subjected to is somehow superior to, say, a minor yet fabulous song from Yankee Hotel Foxtrot called "Heavy Metal Drummer".

Here Jeff Tweedy recalls all the fun the boys rocking out in "shaky, shirty pants" seemed to be having while he was seeking out the misery-loving company of the post-punk hardcore act. The song may be a slight contrast to the two aforementioned marathon workouts on *A Ghost Is Born* but, it tells plenty in the way its sweetly humorous and self-mocking tone alerts listeners to the snobbery permeating the purportedly anti-hierarchical world of alternative rock while immersing them in Metal's vulgar pleasures.

Of course, the very vulgarity of song is what appeals to Philip, as indeed it ought to the rest of us. "Song is an expression of the vernacular, the vulgar and the vocal," he proclaims, "and like a healthy breeding unit, it facilitates the production of more song." In the incubator of a group like Wilco's imagination, long may the song continue to proliferate.

CHRIS BOWEN

WIRE

WWW.THEWIRE.CO.UK

2nd Floor East
88-94 Wentworth Street
London E1 7SA UK
Tel +44 (0)20 7422 5010
Fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011
info@thewire.co.uk
www.thewire.co.uk

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Tel +44 (0)20 7422 5010
info@thewire.co.uk
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Editor-in-Chief & Publisher Tony Harrington
tony@thewire.co.uk

Editor Chris Bohn chris@thewire.co.uk

Deputy Editor Anne Hilde Nossel anne@thewire.co.uk

Reviews Editor David Stubbs david@thewire.co.uk

Editorial & Large Rob Young rob@thewire.co.uk

Art Direction & Design Kelli Ekholm, Jon Foss
info@non-format.com

Advertising Sales (7422 5014)

Editorial Andy and/or thewire.co.uk

Shane Woodman shane@thewire.co.uk

Advertising Production

Sam Smith design@thewire.co.uk

Subscriptions & Administration (7422 5022)

Ben House, Phil England subs@thewire.co.uk

Acting Web Editor Stephanie Manning

Words Steve Barker, Mike Barnes, Ed Banger, Clive Bell, Marcus Bloor, Ben Borthwick, Samantha Brown, Philip Clark, Mia Clarke, Byron Coley, Neil Cooper, Julian Cowley, Christopher Cox, Alan Cummings, Gasta Dayal, Brian Duggan, Phil England, Kevlin Esham, Matt Fyfe, Louise Gray, Andy Hamilton, Jim Hayes, Richard Henderson, Ken Hollings, Hua Hui, David Keenan, Rahma Khamis, Biba Kopf, Art Lange, Alan Lunt, Howard Mandel, Dave Marsh, Brian Marley, Marc Masters, Jerome Maxwell, Will Montgomery, Brian Morton, John Mulvey, Ian Penman, Tim Petchard, Edwin Pouncey, Moss Reeves, Simon Reynolds, Tom Ridge, Stephen Robinson, Peter Rogers, Chris Sharp, Philip Shortman, Bill Shoemaker, Mark Sorkin, Steve Smith, Dave Sponson, David Toop, Elizabeth Waters, Gae Warburton, Ed Ward, Ben Watson, Don Warner, Will Wilner, Barry Witherden

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Distributors

News stands

UK, IRELAND & REST OF THE WORLD
THE WIRE
88-94 Wentworth Street
London E1 7SA UK
Tel +44 (0)20 7422 5010
info@thewire.co.uk
www.thewire.co.uk

USA
100 West 17th Street
New York, NY 10011
Tel +1 (212) 675 1334
Fax +1 (212) 675 1335
www.thewire.co.uk

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Letters

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Remembering Steve

It goes without saying that in our small and fragile music community, the loss of a musician/poet/philosopher/teacher/friend like Steve Lacy is without measure. Perhaps without reason.

Anyone who knew him, listened to him, loved him made music with him was forever transformed. He was no ordinary jazzman, composer or performer – he was no ordinary anything; he was an unpretentious, non-sensuous volcano of invention, a master magician who could pull rabbits out of his soprano sax as if they were mere multiphonic squawks. To do this he always wore a cowboy jacket, usually brown or beige. He was a New York street urchin who played "Cornet Marmalade" with Max Kamrache in the 50s until he was robbed with Cecil and Thelma and became one of the first white musicians to be accepted in the black community. He even landed on the doorstep of the MEV (Musica Elettronica Viva) studio in Rome in 1968 and whitewashed the entire old brick iron-works with millions of notes of such exquisite design that our anachronistic scratching and howling had found a perfect antagonist. His wacky melodic contours and his liberating honks, bleats and drops gave our music "class", bringing it straight out of the utopian fens of raw waste into a sophisticated ballroom of revolutionary polyphony. A Daveland Balinese that could have only been born on the banks of the Tiber in the late 60s.

Much of this history is known, written about and even recorded. What is not known is how Steve and his wife Ina lived some very hard times in those glorious days in Rome – finally giving up altogether to move to a real city (Paris), where their musical life took a much deserved positive turn. I will remember those infinite times Steve wrote every day, the hours of practice to master his instrument, the experiments with time, noise, silence, human breath. Steve was a living feedback, and wrote volumes of pieces during his curtailed lifetime. A Daveland Balinese that could have only been born on the banks of the Tiber in the late 60s. His musical generosity is legendary: the more one took, the more Steve gave, but like Buddha, he understood silence, non-action and endless waiting just to re-enter with one single enlightened tone.

Unlike the music makers most of us are, Steve was making his living performing almost every night of his life in places many of us would find unhealthy or dangerous or both; later and more frequently he found himself invited into the gilded warmth of luxurious concert halls and often into the crossover worlds of

composed and improvised music, but he never missed a chance to return to the dives and clubs where he had met and played with more poets and saints than found in the Christian, Jewish or Muslim calendars combined.

Alvin Curran Rome, Italy

I hear you knocking

Re: the review of Arthur Doyle & Hamid Drake's *Your Spirit is Calling* (Jazz & Improv, *The Wire* 245): I can't blame Edwin Pouncey for his negative words about that magical duo studio recording; not everybody is lucky enough to be attuned to such a high level of expression and creativity. Arthur spoke a unique and very personal language which'd be difficult for most to understand.

Edwin says that after *Alabama Feeding Arthur* never really recovered from that session. How do you compare two records nearly 30 years apart? I'd like to see him live a hard life as Arthur did for the last 30 years, and be sure that he has never drowned, even when he was put into jail for five years (it later transpired he was falsely accused). He is real, man! He deserves max respect! And he is not babbling but talking to the spirits. Much proof exists on how well he has "recovered" in recent years: check *Conspiracy* (Axiom with The Electro-Acoustic Ensemble for a completely different, or duos with Sunny Murray or *Prayer For Peace or Live in Japan 97* with Mizutani and Toyozumi and judge for yourself on how much his raw force has diminished. So I wonder: does Pouncey really know Arthur Doyle's music? His Songbook? I have a couple of other records of Arthur's Electro-Acoustic Ensemble to release next year (one with guests Daniel Carter and Perry Robinson), and you'll see: they'll blow your mind, brothers!

I'd like to write a few words about Hamid too. He was very happy about that rare session, for the music and for having met such a deep spiritual brother. It was my personal bet: to arrange a meeting of these two bright souls, and for sure it was not an easy task. They recognise/hug each other immediately and talked the same language right on the spot. Finally, this is not, as written, a CD but an LP, vinyl only! Anyway, for sure, Pouncey's spirit didn't receive a call, unfortunately... Emanuele Pinotti Qiroo, Milan, Italy

Obscure alternatives

It's good of Steve Beresford (*Letters*, *The Wire* 244) to mention Gentle Fire's Electrola LP. As a member of this long defunct group, I know that my former

colleagues would be happy for it to be reissued. Indeed, interest in the group's work seems to be increasing! For the lack of any offer to reissue this LP, after several years of intermittent planning we are hoping to issue two separate CDs of the group's work by this time next year, using recordings in our archive. No less than a triple album is planned by an Italian label, which would include three of our Group Compositions, a work by each member of the group and works by other composers – eg Stockhausen, Cage (unfortunately not the *Musica For Amplified Toys* Alamos, as we only performed it once, in the recording studio), Earle Brown, Christian Wolff and Ildiyasnaq. Plus, if that is not sufficient, a fourth Group Composition is likely to appear on the Anemone label, in the new series of recordings from the 1972 ICES Festival in London that started with the AMM recording (an interesting recording of the group *Naked Software* was made the same festival, but one member has vetoed its release).

On a parallel track, I was pleased to see Walter Smetak briefly discussed in your Invisible Jukebox with Verucius Confabula in the same issue, because few people in Europe seem to be aware of his work. He was a pioneer inventor of new acoustic instruments, based in Brazil, who died in 1984, and strongly influenced the rather better known group Uakti. Background info and other texts (in Portuguese, Spanish and English) and photos of Smetak's instruments can be found at www.gilbertogil.com.br/smetak/etaktak02.htm and an article about his work (in Spanish and German) at www.latinoamerica-musica.net/frame.html?select=Smetak+under+Compositores). Two LPs were issued: Smetak on Brazilian Philips, and *Interregno* on Marcus Pereira (thanks to Luke Fowler for this info). Unusual but highly commendable is the support Smetak and Uakti received from popular Brazilian musicians, witness the name of Gilberto Gil in the first *Wettable*, and he and Caetano Veloso were involved in the production of Smetak's first LP, while Milton Nascimento collaborated early on with Uakti. Smetak would be another excellent candidate for reissue on CD. Hugh Davies London, UK

Corrections

Issue 245: Kazuo Shibutani is Tsuguru shamisen master Chisato Yamata's heir, not as stated in *The Masthead*. In On Location, Heather Leigh Murray should have been credited for the Glasgow Tryptich photos, Issue 244: Anachronis Rite is female, not male, as stated in *The Computer review of Un Autre Monde Eat Possible*. □

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Bitstream

News and more from under the radar.

Compiled by The Trawler



Chicago sound: Ghost

Following the success of last year's **Adventures In Modern Music Festival**, co-organised by The Wire and Chicago's Empty Bottle club, the line-up for this year's follow-up event has just been announced. Taking place between 22-26 September at the Empty Bottle, the festival promises to be another banger with five nights featuring four artists per night. The line-up is as follows: Boom Bip, Obiwo, Axel Dörner/Franz Hautzinger/Keith Rowe, Leafcutter John (22 September); Gift Of Gab, Scion, Laase Marlaug, David Redford Triad (23); Borbetomagus, Telefon Tel Aviv, Paul Nilsen-Love/Ken Vandermark, The Onks And Future Tread (from Jewelled Antler Collective) (24); Thomas Brinkmann, Sightings, Keith Fullerton Whitman, Entrance (25) and Ghost, Xiu Xiu, Noxagt, Double Leopards (26). www.emptybottle.com >> Wire contributor Christoph Cox, together with Daniel Warner, is the editor of a new book that brings together significant writings on contemporary music practice from the past century. **Audio Culture: Readings In Modern Music** collects essays, chapters and articles by a wide range of writers which track the development of crucial themes in the shaping of avant garde sound and music making. Authors include Brian Eno, John Cage, John Zorn, Derek Bailey, David Toop, Michael Nyman, Steve Reich and Simon Reynolds. The book also features contributions from authors drawn from outside music: Umberto Eco, William Burroughs, Jacques Attali, Theodor Adorno and Marshall McLuhan. Audio Culture looks set to become an invaluable source book, enmeshing developing notions of chance, experimentation, sonic and noise theory, and critical insight. It is published in September by Continuum Books (www.continuumbooks.com) >> Talking of Brian Eno, everyone's favourite sound thinker has just been reunited on record with guitarist **Robert Fripp** for the first time since their groundbreaking brace of duo albums recorded in the 1970s, *No Pussyfooting* and *Evening Star*. Released on CD by Fripp's Discipline Global Mobile label, *The Equatorial Stars* is a return to the Artillery model of their earlier work. As the title

suggests, it also carries echoes of Eno's space recursion from 1982, *Apollo: Atmospheres And Soundtracks*. The sound was armed off by accident, according to Eno: "Somehow my shoe nudged the little red button on the little black box with the little green lights. That button told the little box to tell the digital recorder that we would be recording in a manner for too tedious to explain when in fact we intended to record quite differently, in a manner also far too tedious to explain." Eno is also at work on a new song album, although no date is set for its release. Fripp has been playing live duos in Europe with those Paganinis of the guitar, Joe Satriani and Steve Vai. www.discogs.org/labelinfo and www.enoshop.co.uk >> American free jazz bassist **Kent Carter** and his Danish wife, dancer Michaela Marcus, were recently detained by French authorities in connection with some tenants of theirs who were renting a cottage in the remote countryside area of rural France where they live. In March this year they were cold called from a tourist office and informed of two individuals who wished to rent their guest house for a month. It turned out their paying guests were leading lights of the Basque separatist organisation ETA. On the night on 2 April, both the guest house and Carter's home were raided, and all occupants taken to police headquarters in Paris, where they were held overnight. When it became clear that Carter and Marcus were innocent parties, they were freed, separately, but with no phones or money. Thankfully they were able to reunite through their son, who lives in Paris. However, they are forbidden to leave France, and they are even confined to their home village, while the French police continue to hold important personal possessions like their passports and computers. These actions have left them unable to keep track of their finances or accept any work outside the immediate vicinity. They are currently talking to lawyers about clearing their names and retrieving their possessions and liberty. Meanwhile, any messages of support can be sent to kccarter@dub-internet.fr

>> British improviser **Mike Cooper**, who has lived in Rome for some years, reports that his 12 June show with New York's **No Neck Blues Band** at Rome's Astra Occupato was disrupted by fascist infiltrators. Clad in helmets and face masks, the far right miscreants announced their attack with a smoke bomb, before barging in armed with iron bars and wooden sticks. Several bystanders received injuries, and the venue's entrance and bar were trashed along with No Neck's rented tour van >> **The Pet Shop Boys** are set to soundtrack Sergei Eisenstein's revolutionary film masterpiece *Battleship Potemkin*, at a live concert and screening in London's Trafalgar Square on Sunday 12 September, 8:30pm. The duo have written a mostly instrumental suite for the event, at which their electronics will be accompanied by the strings of The Dresden Sinfoniker. www.ica.org.uk >> German duo **A Certain Frank** have been in Afghanistan working on music and education projects. The group Burke Band arose out of their collaboration with drummer Saskia Von Kitzburg and a young music student called Nargis, playing a drum hidden for six years during the Taliban regime. Nargis also supplies vocals, along with two passers by who got in on the act. The resulting music, originally released as a vinyl 7" by Berlin's Monika label, is now incorporated into Burke Band's four track *Burka Blue EP*, which also includes some video footage, set for 23 August release on Ata Ink. www.ataink.com >> Originally recorded on a cassette machine during the Lou Reed-led **Velvet Underground's** last run in August 1970, and then released as an afterthought in 1972, *Live At Max's Kansas City* has now been reissued by Rhino/Atlantic as a double CD with seven extra tracks, plus sleeve notes by poet Jim Carroll. A mixed blessing, considering the original's barely bootleg quality. The sound might have been touched up but the performances – with Max Tucker away on maternity leave – are as lacklustre and indifferent as they were first time round, regardless of the run's historical significance. □



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HANG ON THE BOX



Hang On The Box (from left): Yi Li Na, Shen Jing, Wang Yue and Xiao Gan

"In China, it's hard to get recognised," explains Shen Jing, drummer with Beijing post-punk quartet Hang On The Box. "You can imagine how difficult it is to play music here, especially for girls. Being musicians for more than a couple of years is seen as an embarrassment. Abroad, a band can play for ten years or more before becoming successful, but in China it's different. It's common for bands to play together for two of three years and then break up."

"I don't think Chinese people understand our music," she adds. "They don't need us – the world needs us." Hang On The Box have already weathered enough crises to sink a lesser group. Bassist Yi Li Na left and returned, original guitarist Fan Ying quit after a US tour and worst of all, on the eve of their first UK dates last year, they were refused permission to leave China. They were, deemed their government, an inappropriate representation of Chinese culture. "We were almost beaten back then," admits Shen Jing. "But we long to get more promotion in Europe, especially Britain. We've always really wanted to play there. When our tour was cancelled, one reason we decided to continue was so that drama could still come true."

The group formed six years ago, when still in their teens. Early gigs at Beijing's legendary Scream Club were explosions of noise and wordless screams. The place was routinely packed – no one had seen girls behaving like that before, and indeed, there have been no others daring to follow since. Their howl of discontent carried across the sea to Tokyo, where the Bantan label liked what it heard and agreed to record them. Released in 2001, their first album *Yellow Banana* revealed a gift for melodic invention and stinging lyrical nose-dives. But this wasn't just another cute, colourful trawl through the English-Chinese dictionary for swear words. The album offers glimpses of alienation and frustration that can sear the soul if they catch you right. Their second album *Di, Di, Di* (as in LSD-D-D, released in 2003) marked a giant

leap forward, its gorgeous pop sensibilities perfectly capturing the moody melancholy that also permeates the films of Wong Kar Wai and Jia Zhang Ke. At their centre is an indefinable discontent, a realisation that the usual retreats of sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll now only serve to break you level. This is not about debauchery or hedonism – it is about forgetting.

Last year's release of their first European album, the compilation *For Every Punk Bitch & Anorexia*, attracted some high profile fans. The 'Yeah Yeah Yeahs' Karen O has voiced her acclaim on their bulletin board, perhaps sensing in vocalist Wang Yue an Eastern counterpart. "I wanna refuse you," Wang Yue confides on the bruised "Spring Out", "Refuse your love/Refuse your best/Allow you to fuck another girl/What am I afraid of?/I'm afraid of nothing/Stay in now/Don't touch me./I'm Mars."

Behind everything is a sense of invisibility, either of being yearned for or fought against. "My loneliness comes because I live on the other side of this world," offers Shen Jing eloquently. "I'm normal, but the world's not normal to me. Sometimes when I'm on the street, I feel like I'm made of glass. I can see everyone, but no one can see me." Right now this feeling is particularly acute. Music reaches Beijing via the Internet and imported magazines, and the group picked up on reissues of ESG and James Chance just as quickly as any number of their No Wave influenced contemporaries in the West. "I can't bear to find some new band with yet another fake punk angle," Wang Yue relieves, revealing her palpable frustration at Hang On The Box's relative invisibility. "At the moment we are looking for a suitable record company to record our third album." They have a new guitarist, Xiao Gan, and a fresh batch of songs they're itching to release. Xiao Gan is an old friend and, perhaps surprisingly, a man. "It'd be happy if more people would just think of us as a band per se," declares Yi Li Na. "We have gone beyond being a girl band. We want to keep the

inspiration of being female musicians, but at the same time be recognised as just an awesome group."

"We plan to keep a modern, experimental sound," Shen Jing enthuses about their new material. "The idea is to let people know that they're listening to Hang On The Box, but also to keep incorporating new elements into that sound. Something like Kraftwerk – you can always recognise them, but they have the ability to create music that's far ahead of everyone else." The change of guitarist has given the group an edgier, more minimal sound, with occasional megaphone vocals and subtle touches of electronic adding depth and texture to the soundscape.

"Shanghai" even manages to include some funky MC-ing and a Krautrock-inspired vocal jam over the course of its seven minutes.

The absorption of such a wide range of influences stems from the group's utter dedication to their music. The idea for Hang On The Box any different since the release of their first album? "I don't think anything has changed," replies Wang Yue. "Unless you count becoming poorer." Yi Li Na echoes these sentiments "The only thing that never changes is our crazy passion for music and our love without money."

It's hard not to admire such attitudes – hard, too, to really comprehend the sacrifice and tribulations that have been made and endured in the name of making music like theirs in China. There is a revelatory moment at the end of "There Is A City" when the group break into a chant of "free, free, free, free" and suddenly you catch the sound of hope in their voices, something largely unspoken and more powerful for it being implied. For a second you glimpse the dimensions of their dreams and at the same time know that what you feel is only the smallest percentage of their longing. And you know why they are hanging on. □ For Every Punk Bitch And Anorexia is out now on Artnodveto Baby. HOTB Website: www.hangonthebox.com



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**ON SALE
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BETH ANDERSON

O'ER THE HILLS AND SWALES
BY JULIAN SAWLEY



"All my pieces are based firmly in personal experience and the sounds or accents of the places and people I've met," observes composer Beth Anderson, born in Kentucky, now based in Brooklyn. Two recent releases have documented the germination of those sounds and accents into dramatically differing forms: *Peachy Keen-O* (Pogus) collects her experimental music and sound text works from the 1970s, while *Swales And Angels* (New World) offers a selection of unapologetically attractive chamber music written between 1985 and 2000.

Turbulent electronic shadowing of a Kentucky auctioneer's rapid verbal delivery on *Ode* (1975) or the sonically challenging physicality of the intrinsically loud organ piece *Tower Of Power* (1973) seem remote from the elegant neo-Romanticism of Anderson's writing for string quartet, yet there's continuity in her concern to make music that's direct and affecting. "In school it was not taught, and not suggested that one's music should be personal," Anderson continues. "Music was taught as though it was conceptual and disconnected from time and place. I do not agree that music must be abstract."

The covers to both CDs depict fertile grassland with trees. For Anderson, Brooklyn's Prospect Park takes the place of open countryside, but she has chosen the word *swale* to designate the form she now favours. It means marshy ground or meadow hosting a variety of plants, and that well suits her musical material, which is intuitively conceived then cut up and juxtaposed as collage. "I'm not imitating a tree or some particular natural structure," she comments. "I am just doing what comes naturally to me. The sort of collages I make now grew out of my life experience – musically, financially, psychologically, how I experience entertainment, my reaction to my education, what I hear around me, my grandmother's crazy outbursts, flipping around many television and radio channels,

fluxus collage, eclectic architecture, interior design and fashion, a certain period in Frank Stella's paintings, I love Kentucky fiddle music, all folk music, I love Ralph Vaughan Williams. My work with dancers returned me to meter."

John Cage was a formative influence. Anderson took classes with him at the University of California, Davis in 1969. "He told stories and brought us multiloops from his gatherings," she recalls. "We performed his music and *Satie's Vexations*." More importantly, Cage's radical aesthetic provided a liberating example for Anderson's approach to composition. This was consolidated during postgraduate study in the adventurous early 1970s climate of Mills College, Oakland. There she studied *Cyffio* Composition with Terry Riley, "learning the basics of Indian raga singing from the tradition of Pandit Pran Nath". Riley was influential for her later development, she notes, in that "he was the only teacher I had who used pitches in a straightforward way, floated in a liquid of sound".

She also witnessed a performance at Mills by Charlemagne Palestine and wrote a piece for him. "It's a graphic score," she explains. "The first movement looks like a rabbit in a maze. The second looks like a lettuce patch. The third is a reinterpretation of the rabbit. It had something to do with the Zen idea that first you see the mountain, then you don't and eventually you do again, but it's completely different after enlightenment. It was premiered in San Francisco about 1974. I admired his work so much. It was really beautiful."

Her primary composition teacher at Mills was Robert Ashley, who recognised the compositional worth of her electroacoustic work *Peachy Keen-O* (1973) and gave the green light to its staging by *Iyleresses*, a group of women composers and performers. "We were allowed a Saturday afternoon concert on the regular series," Anderson remembers. "Despite the fact that Mills is a

women's college at undergraduate level, most of the teachers and staff – and a high percentage of the graduate students – in the music department and electronic music studio were men. It was vital that the door was open."

Anderson has been for many years actively feminist. Her concert series *Women's Work* was initiated in New York in February 2004. "I still want to be a good role model to women musicians," she declares, "but I don't feel I need to do overt things such as only setting words of women poets or only working on music theatre projects based on a woman's life story. I feel that writing my music and proceeding onward is the best model. And I believe in working through organisations such as New York Women Composers, where I'm the treasurer, and the International Association Of Women In Music."

"I am comfortable with being called a 'woman composer'," she continues. "It would not be necessary if women composers and men composers were performed, commissioned, rewarded, reviewed, recorded, published, taught and lauded equally. But we're not." The truth of her observation is evident from the neglect Anderson's own music has suffered until now. Terms are being negotiated for issue of a further CD of her songs, piano and chamber compositions, but much remains lamentably undocumented.

Anderson resists formulating any theoretical position as a woman composer but her vocabulary is uninhibited with regard to words such as 'beauty', 'love' and 'intuition'. In music she considers beauty "the highest goal", and it can be reached most readily through simplicity. "Complication is very good for theorists because it gives them employment," she suggests. "But it really isn't necessary for composers and is not interesting to an audience unless the complication is overcome by the beauty of the result." □ *Swales and Angels* is out now on New World

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'WEIRDO

MARGARETH KAMMERER

BEYOND THAT EMOTION
BY CLIVE BELL



"I recorded a few times, but I was never really happy with it," remarks Italian singer Margareth Kammerer, from her home in Berlin. She's describing the origins of her first solo album, on which Billie Holiday-style renditions of poems by ee cummings and Paul Celan line up alongside half a dozen brazenly odd remixes by Philip Jeck, Fred Firth, Bernard Fleischmann, Nicholas Bussmann and Charisma label boss Christof Kurzmann. "Then I made some recordings in Italy with the help of guitarist Paolo Angeli," she continues, "and I said to my friend Christof Kurzmann, 'This could be nice.' He said, 'I'll listen to it, I may be more objective than you.' So he listened to these five songs, and he said immediately, 'OK, maybe you'd like to put this out on my label.' I said, 'That's great!' but I was surprised, because Charisma is an electronic and improvisation label, and I didn't think he was interested in releasing songs. Then he said, 'Maybe I'd like to ask some people to make remixes.' And I liked this idea very much."

The result is *To Be An Animal Of Real Flesh*, a fresh look at what an album of songs can be – instead of a group. Kammerer has a team of remixers. But she's no stranger in this land of cutting edge electronica, having moved freely among Berlin's avant garde community since relocating there in 1994. Before that she was active in improvisation groups in Bologna, and the link with Fred Firth goes back to the Bologna ensemble Eva Kant, who played material specially written by Firth and Butch Morris alongside their own work.

Once in the German capital, Kammerer formed a group called *Guestar* with Joe Williamson, Leonid Soybelman and Nicholas Bussmann, but soon had to face the reality that her colleagues were simply too

busy to keep the project going. She began to concentrate on solo songwriting and performance, starting with a show in the flat of Andrea Neumann, who specialises in playing the customised insides of a piano. A concert series in someone's flat might induce claustrophobic thoughts in England or Japan, but of course a Berlin apartment can be wonderfully spacious. In fact Kammerer recorded several of her album tracks in friends' flats, including a unique live duet with trumpeter Axel Döner, "I Carry Your Heart With Me". "I feel more relaxed than in a studio, where I get so nervous," she explains. "Time is running out, now you have to produce! These musicians have computers and good microphones, so you make some tea and then you record. And in Berlin these are fine rooms with good acoustics."

Another frequently noted advantage of the Berlin scene is its openness to other artforms, the easy permeability between improvisation, composition, performance, theatre and dance. Kammerer stresses the importance of literature in her work, and two years ago she made a solo version of *Hamlet* for a theatre in Oslo. "I took some texts from *Hamlet* and sang them," she explains. "Then I showed slides of animals in the wild, in the woods – beautiful photos from the 50s. Other slides were incredible photos of special food prepared by a five star master chef."

As for singing, Kammerer studied in Rome with Japanese singer Michiko Hirayama, known for performing work by Giacinto Scelsi and John Cage. "She is 80 and still active," says Kammerer. "In September she sang here in Berlin, *Cantò Di Capricorno* by Scelsi." However, Kammerer finds the position of singers in the world of improvisation

problematic. "It's strange," she sighs. "I've been in this improvisation scene for years, I go to all the concerts and I love this music very much. But there are very few improvising singers that I like. Of course I listen to Robert Wyatt. But my biggest idol was always Billie Holiday. Then there's Phil Minton – but he is great because he is a musician, a trumpeter plays. That's the difference. When I sing, it's all about emotional stuff, I haven't found a way to improvise. Maybe I will find it, but for me there is a difference between a singer and a musician. And I'm a singer, not a musician in this sense."

One unusual quality linking in Kammerer's record is a sense of musical community, a kind of cohesiveness that could give rise to such a collaboration, notwithstanding the current image of the isolated musician tethered by headphones to a laptop. And yet Kammerer has occasionally encountered resistance to placing songs in this context. As one youthful zealot remarked to her: "The song is regressive." She admits this is a complex area, but pleads for it not to be seen in black and white terms.

"I need to find a form for the voice, and that's why I began writing songs," she declares. "It's superficial to say that a song has no freedom. There are emotions in both improvisation and songs. They are different ways of handling emotions. You can say a song is more emotional, while an improvisation is a little more scientific, abstract, more precise. But the voice also has to be really precise to make the song work. Between science and emotion maybe there is another way of handling things – some other mixture of chemicals." (To Be An Animal Of Real Flesh is out now on Charisma)

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GLOBAL CAR: SKOPJE + Bitola



Macedonian ethno-jazz group Polka, the Mosque ensemble, featuring Kenichi Sugimoto, Yoshio Machida, Atsuhiko Ito and Oliver Jorjovski

Macedonia produces a delicious wine called Tigi Zi Jug, which translates as "Yearning for the south". Its name is taken from a famous poem by Macedonian poet Konstantin Miladinov, who was writing about missing the abundant sunshine of his homeland during a stay in Russia. A great deal of Macedonian culture is influenced by the sun – as is Japan, whose original name Nippon means "Origin of the sun".

This summer, Bitola's centre for contemporary public arts called Elementi and the Japanese organisation Coloso Collaboration launched an exhibition of contemporary art entitled Collaboration, the first stage of an ongoing Japan-Macedonia exchange programme. The event took place in Skopje and Bitola, with the second stage set to follow this autumn in Japan. The main purpose of the event was to encourage visual artists and experimental/improvising musicians to reconsider the whole notion of collaboration. Forging creative partnerships might come naturally to music makers – even those meeting for the first time – but fine art tends to remain a more solitary practice. So the works in Collaboration allowed viewers to compare approaches in each discipline and judge whether the joint efforts had actually helped to push back the limits of expression.

The music events were held at Bitola's Mosque City Gallery (located, as the name suggests, in a former mosque) and at Tocka, a modern and well organised alternative gallery space in the capital Skopje. Here, as in most other cities, the conventional musical menu consists of a diet of HipHop, R&B and rock. But occasionally, and in the old city of Bitola especially, you could pick out the strains of more traditional dance music, for example in a taxi, a market, or on TV. This music has unusual, complex rhythmic structures – 4/7 or 4/11 are not uncommon – which, to ears attuned to contemporary electronics, sometimes seem to place them closer to cut-up beats and glitch rather than contemporary pop pulses. Essentially, in every sequence the accent falls on the end of the beats, causing a pattern that sounds like regular stumbling. When you dance to this rhythm, it's more crucial to be able to hit that final accent with everyone else rather

than to holding down the groove on every beat. I felt this musical approach summed up the way the Macedonians organised the event as a whole. Decision making tended to occur in the moment, rather than in the preparation.

The music participants included Macedonians Oliver Josifovski and Fotin, with Japanese artists Kenichi Sugimoto, Tetsuro Yasunaga, Atsuhiko Ito and myself. Josifovski is a multimedia improviser and a composer of theatre music who originally studied music in Sofia, Bulgaria. He plays the double bass with contact microphones; bowing strings and beating the body of the instrument, he controls samples with trigger effects. He also plays his original sound system using glass. But unfortunately he was denied permission to play it on this occasion by the Ministry of Culture, which, bizarrely, is required. Fotin are an ethno-jazz group. Their predominant soundscape is actually Macedonian, but with some jazz inflections, and with a little tango oasane of Astor Piazzolla. The vocalist Branislav Nikolov sometimes sings in a non-specific language. You can hear their peculiar brand of Fourth (or is it Fifth?) World music on their album *Dankey Hot*, released on local label Kukuzl Music.

Sugimoto and Yasunaga are both members of the electroacoustic group Minamo, but here they played solo and in newly formed partnerships. Sugimoto utilised guitar and laptop. He also goes out solo as Fourdork, under which name he has just released a solo album on Apesauce. Extremely delicate guitar loops on long delays drift in a flow of electronics. Yasunaga played laptop and electronics. In Minamo, you could say, he produces water for the other players to swim in, but in this solo display he produced a vivid sound texture that was almost tactile enough to touch. Ito, promoter of Tokyo's Off Site Venue, played his own instrument, the Oton, using fluorescent lights and electronics. Unfortunately his own 300V lights were confiscated at the airport before the performance, so he bought a 220V bulb in Skopje to make a completely new version. He used the instrument, which looks like a sword, to produce light flickers and killer noise in a mosque. I played my new Steptan, which I call the

Amorphone #3 (the name incorporates the words amorphous and phone), morphed with Max/MSP processing. The construction of sound is like Indian sitar music, which has strings for resonance. I play simple patterns or melodies with Steptan and MSP software, which produces a light drone part from the processing Steptan sound. My two previous Amorphones sounded more like gangs with special scales, but #3's characteristic is a very long sustain, with a clear and bright sound, although the size is smaller than a regular one.

We each played a solo, then Josifovski, Sugimoto, Yasunaga, Ito and I played as an ensemble. The Japanese artists were not familiar with Josifovski's sound in advance, and vice versa. During the soundtrack, we discussed how the ensemble could work. Josifovski adamantly wanted to play without any rehearsal together, a strategy that proved successful. Fotin play compositions, so they did not collaborate with the other musicians, although they did work together on an installation with two Japanese visual artists, cab and Isamu Joseph Yamazoe, who decorated the surface of Islamic columns with some sweets and candies, so it looked like a birthday cake. Nikolov and cab set the candies alight and then the music was started. The Macedonians' sound was strong and fiery, while the Japanese one was generally more delicate (although Ito likes to play loud). So you could say the mixture was like oil and water, but once we played together in the liquid called improvisation, another liquid was created which gave all of us, with our various cultural backgrounds, different perspectives.

The best wines are produced by being grown in a climate where there is a big difference in temperatures between night and day. And of course, strong sunshine is also necessary. Sometimes this extreme climate cannot easily support human life. But on the other hand, it could be said that such hard environment provides the possibility of producing very special and charming things. □ Websites: (Coloso collaboration) www.amorfon.com/-coloso/ (Elementi) www.cac.org.mk/elementi/about.htm

A man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a dark t-shirt, is sitting on a wooden bench. He is holding a large, white, spherical object with a blue face and a black dot for a nose. The background shows a window with multiple panes and a light-colored wall.

INVISIBLE JukeBox: ASIAN DUB Foundation

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TESTED BY DAVID STUBBS. PHOTOS BY ANNA SCHORI

Steve Chandra (aka Chandrasonic) is guitarist with Asian Dub Foundation, who arose from Community Music, a London based organisation active until the mid-90s. He joined the group in 1994 – the following year, they released their debut album, *Facts & Fiction*.

Deliberately out of kilter with what they regarded as the retrograde Britpop movement in the UK, ADF found their initial success in France. However, with subsequent albums such as 1998's *Radi's Revenge*, they began to attract attention in the UK, particularly with their campaigning on behalf of Satpal Ram, a young Asian man widely believed to have been jailed unjustly for killing his assailant in self defence during a racist attack.

Asian Dub Foundation have done much to dispel the air of earnestness and austerity that had traditionally surrounded agitpop. Their music is a galvanising and highly charged mix of serrated punk, furious lyrical chat, dub bass, futuristically bent electronics and sampled traditional elements, culled, they say, from their parents' record collection. Their live shows are especially incendiary – they have been described as "the best live act in Britain".

Unselfconsciously, they have always retained contacts with their community music beginnings, going so far as to launch ADF Education (ADFED), a workshop project dedicated to teaching young people music skills, as well as participating in anti-globalisation events and compilations such as *Another World Is Possible*, put together by attac.org. They are essentially internationalists, whose tours of Brazil, Cuba and Eastern Europe have been more in the nature of cultural exchanges than mere stop-offs.

More recently, they have performed live soundtracks to the French movie *La Haine*, which depicts the desperation of life in a Parisian ghetto, and Gillo Pontecorvo's 1965 masterpiece *The Battle Of Algiers*, a compulsive account of the struggle for Algerian independence.

ADF are about to commence work on their fifth studio album. More remarkably, they have also been commissioned by the English National Opera to write an opera about the life of the Libyan leader Colonel Qadhafi. The jukebox took place in London.

JIMI HENDRIX "SWEET ANGEL"

FROM THE JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE (BACA) 2000

Well, it's obviously Jimi, but I was a bit put off by the drum machine. That's amazing! I thought it was one of the many Jimi Hendrix impersonators. It's "Angel", isn't it?

It would eventually become "Angel". But this is a composite of recordings made in November and December 1967, a very early demo version entitled "Sweet Angel".

But with a drum machine? This is a radically different version. It makes it sound contemporary.

It's a Rhythmic Ace, a very primitive drum machine, a pre-echo of how Hendrix might have sounded had he engaged with electronic rhythms.

That's an inspired choice. Awesome. There are a few really primitive drum machine-based tracks that I really like from the late 60s, early 70s like Sly & The Family Stone's "Family Affair", the early Can albums. I think he would have worked with these sorts of electronics. How old would he have been when samplers came out? His mid-20s. You hope he would have continued to engage with things the way Miles Davis did.

Was Hendrix a touchstone for you?

Yeah, very much so. Thing is, I don't consider him to be this huge guitar icon at all. I see him as someone who had got an instrument and wants to paint the pictures in his mind with it. And that's a perspective you could apply to any instrument, any non-musical format, even. The guitar is so expressive for him that whenever he says something, the guitar illustrates it – or vice-versa, he says what his guitar is saying. There's no formal distinction between rhythm and lead, between lyric and sound, it's a very holistic way of making music – and that's unfortunately what most of his imitators failed to grasp. I don't think he was the first to do that – Bo Diddley was probably the first – but he was the most audacious and brilliant. The Who mastered feedback but Hendrix turned it into an art.

FAUST "AUFRUCH NACH RUMÄNIEN"

FROM FROST HÄRER NOSFERATU (OLANDAGRA) 1997

It sounds like someone who's built on Stockhausen

but isn't Stockhausen. Is it Can?

Getting warm.

Faust?

Right. It's their soundtrack to the 1922 FW Murnau

film *Nosferatu*, which they performed live.

Oh, right, it's that! Yeah, this is the first time I've

heard this. How was it?

I felt it had a great rolling energy, as if they were tracking the psychotic trauma of the film. Isn't this similar to what ADF did with *La Haine* and *The Battle Of Algiers*?

Well, yes and no. Similar in that it's a group playing a live soundtrack to a movie, but the thing about these guys is that they've abandoned rhythm [laughs], whereas for us, the key point with *La Haine* and *The Battle Of Algiers* was finding the rhythm of the action. This isn't to knock Faust at all – they're great, I have that first album with the transparent cover – but I think when you're doing this sort of thing with silent film it's quite easy just to make a lot of abstract, avant garde noises, whereas in a film with dialogue, to find a rhythm that motors it along, that uses actual beats to propel the energy of the film is harder.

How does it work when you undertake this sort of

soundtrack? Is it prepared? Spontaneous?

There's a variety of methods but the finding of the rhythm is spontaneous. And it's extremely exciting when you find a rhythm that fits the scene because you, as the listener or viewer, make it work. It's interactive. And it's really obvious as hell when it doesn't work. In a way, you're imposing a bit of yourself on the film but the film doesn't mind, the film allows you in.

I must admit I was concerned at the prospect of your creating a new soundtrack for *The Battle of Algiers*. As with Bernhard Hermann's music for *Hitchcock's Psycho*, the original soundtrack by Ennio Morricone is so integral, indispensable to the film.

Well, we don't dispute with it, we remix it. There's only one scene when we turn it down, and we don't even turn it down then, we sort of flick it in and out in an old School dub style. And there's parts we use which people did think were part of the Morricone soundtrack.

With La Haine, there isn't a soundtrack as such, just musical moments. But the difference is that in the original the director Matthieu Kassovitz uses 'Burning And Looting' by Bob Marley, whose lyrics suit what's happening on the screen but whose music doesn't fit the tempo. So for this one, we took 'Th9', a track from our album *Facts And Fictions*, which matched the pace of what was going on in the movie.

Do you find reactions a bit strange at this kind of event? The protocol for audience reaction at movies is different from that at gigs.

Yeah, it's almost the direct opposite of an ADF gig. It's a more constant, cerebral experience, whereas gigs are stop-start. But it's just as invigorating, it's still a collective feel, we're trying just as hard to involve everyone in what's going on. We become another channel for that to happen. And they're both such powerful films that the endings are a huge, huge release, one that actually surpasses the gig experience. Probably *Algiers* was a shade better for us than *La Haine* because it was our second go at this sort of project and also because it timed with events in Iraq, which gave it a particular resonance.

MASAYUKI TAKAYANAGI 'IMPROVISATION NO 3'

FROM THREE IMPROVISATIONS ON A THEME OF GADUVA (JANUARY 1960)

[Shouting above the scolding, deafening shower of raging, tabletop guitar] It could be a whole number of people. I like it though, I must say. It's not Throbbing Gristle or Cabinet Voltaire, is it?

He was Japanese.

[Discouraged] He's not music from Godwin is it?

[Laughing] I've got that.

It's Masayuki Takayanagi — one of his improvisations *On A Theme Of Qadhafi*.

Right! I heard about this and tried to download it! [Looks at elevennotes, all in Japanese]. Er...

He started off as jazz musician but then took a violent left turn and became a pioneer of tabletop guitar, he is Keith Rowe. Towards the end of his life, he did a piece drawing on tapes of Hitler. Perhaps he saw Qadhafi simply as a dictator. But in the Asian Dub Foundation ENO opera project, you'll be depicting him as a very complex, myriad character.

Yeah, let's hope so. The thing about Qadhafi is the vision, and how the vision unfolds in practice, which isn't pretty. And he was a vision untrammelled or unfettered by diplomacy or Machiavellianism, which is what makes him a maverick, almost like a musician or

artist. The whole idea of the Green Book in which he set out his revolutionary ideas, the distinct philosophy, the vision that attempts to solve the world's basic problems — a theory of everything.

It's almost certain that he was used as a scapegoat by the West, over the Lockerbie disaster in particular — despite his subsequently admitting responsibility.

He was a scapegoat but he was a willing scapegoat. He liked to take responsibility for things he didn't actually do — terrorism, supporting various revolutionary groups. But the most he ever did internationally was write the cheques. What he was involved in was the elimination of his Libyan opponents. But then, there are the more progressive aspects of his regime, especially in the 70s and 80s, the redistribution of wealth, the schools and hospitals that were built, women's rights. It's an amazing jumble of very progressive things, very repressive things, pure vision and the impossibility of putting the vision into practice. Plus the role of Qadhafi is key — he's very visual, very theatrical.

It's going to be as much about the myth of Qadhafi as the man himself, how that was made, shaped, the processes by which that occurred — plus the role he himself had in trying to create his own myth.

Was John Adams's *Nixon in China* an influence?

Yes, I enjoyed it. I'm not normally a fan of contemporary opera but in this context it did seem to me, it also conveyed the visual spread of the Cultural Revolution, the depiction of Kissinger and Nixon was superb. To me, it was an artistic exploration of international politics, which is certainly a tangent of what ADF are about.

SUBA

'SEREA'

FROM SABA KHAL, SABA KHAL: A TROPICAL FLASH OF THE FUTURE (STERNENBRASSEL) 2004

Is it Japanese? French? Quite good, though, whatever it is.

It's from Brazil — although its creator was born in Yugoslavia.

It's not DJ Suba, is it?

Spot on.

I have his album. He died — the story goes, his apartment caught fire and he went back in to get his records and... He was sent to make it big. When ADF went to Brazil, we encountered his work. There's this incredibly lively strain of drum 'n' bass in Brazil — you know, it was with DJ Marley Marl also, who has become very fashionable in the UK, but deservedly so.

There have been a lot of Brazilian compilations recently but the whole notion of 'favela chic' is a bit stomach-turning, considering what life is actually like in those places, as depicted in films like *Bus 174*. But on the more positive side, good music has come out of it and been established. If there is an interest, it's because of the people there, who generate so much colour and energy and vibe, it's irrepressible.

ADF did go to visit one of the favelas, the ghettos in Rio, a particularly rough one. City Of God came out of where we were, and there was a whole 'Guns out of the ghetto' campaign going on while we were there. But for us, although we played with loads of the musicians there, and we introduced them to some technical gear they hadn't seen before, really we felt they had nothing to learn from us — we were learning from them. People manage to keep this amazing spirit despite the shadow of violence and poverty, drugs, turf wars, guns going off every few minutes. Favelas were

certainly no-go areas when we were there but hopefully, with the new leadership in Brazil, that's beginning to change. The new President da Silva grew up in an slum himself.

BOB DYLAN

'HURRICANE'

FROM 04345 (1980) 1989

Oh yes, it's Dylan, 'Hurricane'. Funny you should play this, we were asked to do a version of this song, a few weeks before the premiere of the film *Hurricane* [based on the life of Reuben 'Hurricane' Carter, the boxer unjustly jailed for murder, subject of Dylan's song]. I think people were making parallels with Satpal Ram, whom of course we campaigned for. Strangely, 'Free Satpal Ram' starts with a violin, as does this. The great instrument of lament for wrongly convicted prisoners...

I wish we'd done a version of this now. I think this is a very good song but I must admit I find most of his music to be a travesty. Just because you were an icon then doesn't give you a right to be an icon now. For the last 30 years I think he's been truly awful. Did you see that film in which he plays a rock star [Hearts Of Fire]? So awful. But I do love Highway 61, *Reverend and the Blues* and *Blonde On Blonde*.

So you're not especially a fan of his protest period?

See, I like the idea that he was considered a traitor. When ADF started, we were considered to have betrayed our Aesthetics by some people. They'd say, 'I expected you to be playing stars' or 'I expected you to be wearing your costumes' or stuff like that. So I love the fact that Dylan was attacked, say, for going electric, or Miles Davis attacked for going 'commercial' in his electric period. I mean, *The Corner* commercial, are you mad?

AMM

'WHAT IS THERE IN USELESSNESS TO CAUSE YOU DISTRESS?'

FROM AMM/SCOT 1986 1986

Yeah [pained], this sounds very much like the LMC Eastern European jazz scene — is this John Stammers? He is someone we do have a link with, in his teachings and the way he tried to universalise music, tried to encourage anybody and everybody to be involved in music regardless of their skills and background.

It's AMM, from 1966.

No, I know very little about them, or this scene. This was done in the 60s — fair enough, this is 1966 and this is them doing it and I'm sure it sounded fantastic back then but for people still to be doing this now and for it still to have an avant garde veneer, really annoys me intensely. It's not avant garde. Anyone doing this now is an avant garde as Obama. Perhaps avant garde is not a phrase that even free improv practitioners and listeners would apply to the music if they were truthful — in some respects, it's akin to folk music, a discipline, with its preserved values, crafts, customs.

It's a tradition of its own but it's not at the forefront. It's retro. I never liked this early 70s radical left wing idea that the more unlistenable the music you made, the more radical and leftist it was...

But then Cornelius Cardew of AMM revolted against that very idea and decided to make very tonal, song-based music which he imagined would be more conducive to the ordinary proletariat and the results were...

Even worse, right? Yeah! I think it's a two way thing.

You've got to have some sort of excitement – excitement, rawness and directness.

**EMIR KUSTURICA &
THE NO SMOKING ORCHESTRA
"LOST IN THE SUPERMARKET"**

FROM VASCULO: *WORLD IS POSSIBLE* (ATTACQ/CIRCQ) 2004

Is this Indian brass band music?

No. Recognise the tune yet?

[Guffaws] "Lost in the Supermarket", The Clash! Oh, yeah, we're on this compilation [looks over cover] This was done by attacq.org. We were at the event to launch this in Paris.

Do compilations like this emphasise that the notion of 'protest music', once almost mandatorily grey and grueling, has now become much more exciting and variegated without compromising its core messages and values?

Yeah, definitely. And it's become very visual, even party-orientated, which is really good. It has changed, it's more widespread. Unfortunately, corporate control is so great that it gets very little coverage, all the channels are blocked up. More people marched against the war in Iraq than they did against Vietnam and yet this gets less profile, less coverage. But balanced against that information monopoly you've got the Internet. It's like there's two worlds and a high wall divides them.

Everything's underground, everything's DIY nowadays – because everything else is so determined by marketing. But this whole album is a wonderful example of superb packaging, great music, brilliant theme, brilliant campaign. And a great organisation. They're French based, multi-denominational. They're able to reach this massive constituency of protest.

**GANG OF FOUR
"HISTORY'S BUNK"**

FROM SOLID GOLD REMIX 2004

I do recognise this...

It's quite energetic, even for them.

Gang Of Four?

Right. It was originally the B side to 1981's "What We All Want" but is included in this year's reissue of Solid Gold.

I was especially a fan of the first album, myself. It's a brilliant guitar sound here, though.

Again, there was that problem in the 80s with politico music that sonically, asres automatically tightened when you embarked on agit-pop. Whereas the guitar on this, especially for the time, is utterly incontinent.

Sure, and this doesn't really have much precedent. There's punk, funk and Captain Beefheart in the mix here but they really went out on their own. I always thought they were much better than The Clash. I mean, for a start, what a name, Gang Of Four! And the lyrics were so subtle, the deconstruction, the politics of consumption. The Clash I'm afraid for me were a bit posturing, a bit James Dean, which I found off-putting – revolutionary chic. One of the things that ADF is about is day to day work, gross roots stuff, rather than just banner-waving.

It's a slow, laboured, unglamorous process.

Whereas revolutionary chic is about over-romanticising that process, trying to cut out the work involved and getting straight to the perruquism of the victory celebration. That's what Che Guevara could never handle – he had to get out of Cuba because he couldn't stand the boredom of financial spreadsheets

and agricultural issues. So he went to try to start a revolution in Bolivia.

**USTAD AMJAD ALI KHAN
"RAGA BILASHKANI TODI"**

FROM SARCUS: *NUSTARI* 1995

[Listens intently] It's not Rav Shankar... Ustad...?

Ustad Amjad Ali Khan.

Right! Indian classical music was the soundtrack to my every Sunday morning. This isn't the arid, though, is it? It's the sarod.

Correct. This concert was recorded on a Sunday morning, in January 1994 at the Kula Gallery in London. He was in good form.

What I find listening to music like this is that it changes time, it deformats/reformats time. Whatever I'm doing, it's like a Pavlov's Dog thing, you're automatically arrested by it. And then, as you journey into it, maybe about ten minutes, once the raga is exposed, you're drawn in towards a cone. People talk about the music as relaxing and meditative, but actually it can take you to some very dark places, very serious places. It is meditative but the content of the meditation is what's vital.

Again, it's music that is on one level always 'the same', formally and in the way it proceeds but which yields a rich abundance of results and experiences.

How would you draw on Indian classical music for ADF? Would you consider it too 'pure'?

Oh we do have our fair share of drones! There's a track on the next album that's the nearest to classical as we've approached. We find our way back to it but not in obvious ways.

**SUN RA
"SPECTRUM"**

FROM THE SOLAR MYTH APPROACH VOLUME 1 & 2 (CHASLY) 2001

[Intently] Sun Ra! "Spectrum"! From The Solar Myth Approach, isn't it?

Bullseye again. It was originally recorded in 1971.

This track is scary, I'm so glad you played me this – I lost this album, I haven't heard this in 15 years.

How were you introduced to Sun Ra?

Someone bought me an album of his for my birthday. I don't know why. Sun Ra is quite abstract but there is also the great vocal and jazz things he's got going. But when he does something like this, it's so evocative of everything he's talking about – Egyptology, deep space. I think Sun Ra's cosmology is amazing. **Sun Ra's music is the model of the reality he's espousing, isn't it? A necessary creation of mental space?**

There's an interconnectedness. When I hear Sun Ra, I hear galaxies colliding but also the smallest molecular structure. And even the way he dressed – it was a serious philosophy. Serious, serious.

Appertaining to the black experience, is the idea of the Afro-futurist thing that any place is better than here and now?

The beautiful thing with Sun Ra is what happens in the film *Space Is The Place*, the idea that it begins in the ghetto – this amazing scene with Ra arriving from his spaceship in this ghetto in Philadelphia, talking to these youths with Afros and flares... It goes back to the favela thing, using these places as launchpads for a vision into a new world, with very few resources. That's a wonderful philosophy – that you can go into the poorest part of the world and come out with a fantastic, visionary, intergalactic artistic statement that's both energetic and has a social purpose. □



BEREAN AND BEREAN ASAD

FOR VOCALIST PHIL MINTON, SINGING IS AN IMMENSELY PHYSICAL ACT ROOTED IN THE WILD BODY ART OF ANTONIN ARTAUD AFTER ITS LIBERATION BY JOHN COLTRANE. BEGINNING IN MIKE WESTBROOK'S BIG BAND AND WELFARE STATE, WHERE HE FORMED HIS PARTNERSHIP WITH PERCUSSIONIST ROGER TURNER, MINTON'S PARALLEL COMMITMENTS TO FREE IMPROV AND SONG HAVE BEEN PLAYED OUT ON STAGES, THE STREETS AND PICKET LINES. WORDS: BEN WATSON. PHOTOS: THOMAS BUTLER



Phil Minton is a singer who's been living in music since 1962 when he left his hometown of Turku, a seaside resort far out on England's south west coast. Aged 22, he moved to London to become a professional musician and join The Mike Westbrook Band. Although praised by arrangers and composers as an interpretive singer, and as a distinctive trumpeter, Minton is drawn towards something entirely different by the language of the modernist movement. He becomes a sound poet, a larynx and tongue retro-engineer, a one-man vocal apocalypse, a sound poet. He riffs on the outer edges of vocal expression: gurgles, retches, glottal ruptures, wheezes, throat spasms, asphyxiation, compulsive laryngismus. Ultimately, Minton's singular performances put his audiences through seances of panic, trauma and wonder which resolve to highly wrought music. No actor – except perhaps those directed by Peter Brook in his 1960s 'Theatre of the Absurd' – is as good as untroubled by the usual sisters of acknowledged style, and with such a cosmopolitan repertoire of vocal noise.

Appropriately enough, Minton is currently performing in a music-theatre piece about Antonin Artaud, with words by Belgian playwright Jan Fabre and music by Eric Siechem. Called *Man in Trubusson*, it has already received performances in Belgium and the Netherlands. Minton believes Artaud's artless art – everything reduced to the performer's wild body – anticipated the assault on repressive European culture that arrived in the 1960s. Recently, Artaud has become the figurehead of choice for artistic radicals who believe that rationality itself, rather than capitalism, is the main enemy. Following Artaud, André Breton recommended that artists 'use the most violent and most destructive behaviour, far from subverting bourgeois values, actually allow the establishment to patronise artists. His criticism still resonates (was Sid Vicious 'more radical' than Johnny Rotten?)

Artaud's trans biography – early acting and literary acclaim unraveling into heroin addiction and incarceration in mental asylums – made him a pin-up for the anti-psychiatry movement of the 60s. However, its attempt to subvert French literary culture actually led to a job done. Those lucky enough to locate a recording of his famous *To Have Done With The Judgment Of God* radio broadcast can't be disappointed. Breaking from a tradition as powerful as that of French poetry and theatre wasn't easy. Artaud blamed it on the rhythms of radio transmission, but – as he wrote to Colette Thomas in June 1946 – he could detect the voice and tone of mainstream opera singer Albert Lambert in his performance. He was fully able to break every aesthetic and moral code, but was nevertheless bound by the rhetoric of his age and ended up sounding like a Parnassian opera star. The 19th century trappings of scenery, costume and plot had been burnt off, but the voice itself required further work.

Technologies of transmission are important here. Records provide a different context to that of the written page. Nuances of accent and emphasis allow the instant judgments about sincerity which people make face to face. One is no longer simply judging deployment of literary codes – the communication system of the elite – but of behaviours that merge imperceptibly with those of home, street and bar. Familiar with a wide range of voices, today's listeners – for whom the voices of Muddy Waters or Estlin Phillips are as much a part of the cultural landscape as Phil Spector or the Beatles – are not quite so startled as a vocalist. Phil Milton's great achievement, in other words, is that he sounds nothing like Lambert. Faced with his improvisations, the listener confronts sounds more readily associated with the

the intimacies of sexual coupling, the scissored and the insensate sequester – or even the terminal void. Unlike Artaud, Milton was born into an era when mechanized reproduction and the black American revolution – fused together in a package named jazz – laid the basis for a genuinely unexpressed, non-literary vocalise. He listened to John Coltrane every day between 1957 and 1967. His improvisations show that he grasps the inner structure of Coltrane's new universal language. Musically, Milton starts with *Live At Seattle* (1965), where Coltrane and Pharoah Sanders started howling into their microphones.

[illegible]

It's instructive to try writing this down. One becomes aware of the parameters that letters and punctuation omit: high and low notes, alterations in volume and speed, dramatic phrasing, interconsonantal traffic, labial interference, laryngeal hyperbole. If you tried to notate every nuance, you'd end up writing the 'impossible' scores associated with Brian Ferneyhough and the New Complexity school of composition. Except even then – especially then – you'd lose the sense of release, of joy, of unbridled invention on the part of the singer.

Although free improvisation spurs Minton to go far beyond received notions of jazz, Minton's abiding influences remain Charlie Parker, John Coltrane and Eric Dolphy. Not so much echoing their note sequences as emulating their spirit, cutting sense of playful honesty. Arguably, it's with percussionist Roger Turner on board that Minton achieves his most radical performances. Turner's astonishing *alacort* – the fastest percussionist I've ever seen – means he can play rasps and smacks that are like mouth noises. When they're at full pelt, you can't tell the pair apart. It's a new music – alien and pristine, shockingly alive in every cell.

"Turner is quick as a percussionist," declares Menton, "but his ideas are still quicker – varying the thing that's hit, the way it's hit, the duration of the hit. After the first couple of times we did it, we realised that two people could make an entire music. We knew we had something, something real."

Derek Do, released on Leo Records in 1993, is the duo's masterpiece. Like Tony Do on drums or Derek Bailey on guitar, Minton has developed an entire new vocabulary of sound for his purposes. In 1986, Leo released *Ruff* by a quartet named The Firm, with Minton's voice and Turner's percussion joined by Alan Tomlinson on trombone and Hugh Davies on live electronics. The presence of Hugh Davies is fascinating, since he was a member of Derek Bailey's Music Improvisation Company, which recorded an album for ECM in 1970 (and which has recently been

released on CD in Japan). When MIC did a radio broadcast on BBC Radio 3 in July 1969, they were billed as the London Instrumental And Electronic Improvising Group. Like Bailey with his stereo amplifiers and volume pedals, Oxley and Davies were pioneers in using electronic equipment to allow new modes of musical interaction: the vocabulary of free improvisation is unthinkable without their input. In fact, if improvisers restrict themselves to proper instruments and traditional technique, the music loses its dialectic between unmediated sound and personal control: a crucial tension vanishes.

It's the sound that actually matters, not the gear. It all ends up going in the human ear, so the mouth, tongue and throat can spout it back. Phil Minton is the proof. He internalises all the 60s experimentation and manages to make vocal sounds with an equivalent range, flexibility and suggestibility. When For 4 Ears released *Q* by poire x Minton this year (see the final track on *The Wire* Tapper 11, with issue 24-4), Minton was perfectly at home in Glinter Müller's electronic. His song *Waves* is a perfect example, whereas *Waves* provides a striking contrast. Compared to his records with Turner, *The Westbrook Blake* (1980) and *Whod Side Are You On* (2003) – the latter by a quartet with Varyan Weston on piano, The Sex's Luc Eac on bass and Michael Vatcher on drums – sound formal and rather sentimental. In the extended vocalese of Minton's improvisations, all the traditional trappings for evoking emotion are abandoned, simply because they take too long for his restless imagination to endure. Although he's using the oldest instrument known to humankind, Minton's music is as much about the songs of the animal kingdom. Minton makes the music as hectic and urgent as lives harried by faxes, emails and mobile phones.

As usual, it was black America that showed the way to a musical culture that could deal with the exigencies of modern life: the revolutionary music of Louis Armstrong and John Coltrane. Mirson also had a highly musical family background. This meant that the example of jazz fell on exceptionally fertile ground. Welsh Methodism and community singing were the unlikely – but crucial – seedbed, I asked him about his family.

"My mother was just a housewife, really," Milton recalls, "but she was a semi-professional singer as well. She'd sing the songs of the day, almost semi-jocular like 'Bless This House', and some light opera. Fantastic voice, she was a soprano. My father was a bass singer, he sang in choirs. I had an uncle, Tom, he was a tenor. I used to try and sound like all of them. They'd rehearse at home, and do concerts in places like old people's homes, the Methodist Church Hall, freemen's conventions. Some of my first memories are going to hear them sing in American bases in the early 1940s – also the sound of the siren, which was another intriguing sound for me. You're supposed to be frightened of a siren, but for a little three year old kid it was fantastic, you'd just get excited. I didn't really get it that there were all these Germans dropping bombs and trying to kill me. I thought the sound of the siren was wonderful."

One of the days on which I interviewed Minton was the 60th anniversary of D-Day. TV and radio were full of it. The local press on the south coast issued special supplements full of reminiscences from veterans. Minton remembers D-Day too. "A strong memory from 1944 in Torquay was a sound like this," he says, breaking off to sing a low and thick "mmmmmmmmmmh". "My mother said, 'There's a lot going over tonight...'," he continues. "It was D-Day, and they were going over to hammer Normandy. There





were a lot of Allied or blues in Devon. Of course I hadn't a clue that they were airplanes going out to kill Germans, to me it was a beautiful sound."

Minton came from a traditional English working-class home, with the respectable front parlour that was rarely used. "The family home was a terraced house in the working part of Torquay," he says. "The sitting room with a piano in it we only used on a Sunday. The kitchen was in the back. No refrigerator or telephone. My parents came to Torquay from Wales, most of the people in the street were Welsh. There was a little organisation but my parents were members of the Welsh Society, they used to go to concerts there. I was singled out at school to do little bits of singing, but I was never very clear about what kind of voice I had. Even then, I was experimenting."

The presence of American troops brought with it new-fangled delights such as the radio. The young Minton would imitate the voices he heard. "I was a boy soprano," he says, "but I'd mess around. One of my favourite singers was Jimmy 'Schmoobie' Durante. 'It's my nose's anniversary, yeah, here we go, I got the biggest schnozz in the biz...' Amazing guy! I was really intrigued. I used to do parly impersonations, I'd do Schmoobie Durante going into Kershaw's Ferner. I used to do both my parents and my uncle. As a soprano I could do my mother's voice. I used to attempt to sing bass too. A lot of children try that."

Was Minton encouraged to play the piano in the parlour? "It was intimidated, actually," he responds. "My older sisters were both pianists. When I was eight I had osteomyelitis, bone disease. I got it on Christmas Day 1948. Going back to school, I couldn't cope. I failed the 11 plus [examination], which the rest of the family had all passed. I started hanging around with the naughty boys. Now there were cops coming round the house if there was something up in the neighbourhood. I was scared of visiting the poor box. I think my parents gave up on me academically. It was put down to the fact that I'd been ill. I left school at 15."

Minton remembers 30' LPs of Schoenberg and Bartók records his uncle bought from a club, but they didn't make much impression. Voices were what fascinated the young Minton.

"I think the first time I really noticed a performance was the tune 'Unchained Melody', a hit of the summer of 1966," he ponders. "There was an English cover, Jimmy Young – this was before he became a radio DJ. I couldn't stand it, it was terrible. The original version by Al Hibbler. He was a blind singer who sang with Duke Ellington. I couldn't work out why Jimmy Young made me feel ill, and this other guy I loved so much. It was obviously the performance, not the notes, because it was the same song. Then I started to notice Louis Armstrong. I got a 78rpm of 'Basin Street Blues'. My father didn't like jazz, but he was keen that I be interested in something, as opposed to going out and being a naughty boy. He bought me an LP called Introduction To Jazz by the Rev Rahsaan, an American. I loved this music. 'I'll still get it. It was excellent, starting with New Orleans jazz, the most modern stuff was the New Orleans Festival of the 40s with Bunk Johnson and the clarinetist George Lewis. Most of it was from the 20s and 30s, New Orleans ensemble music."

Voice of America, the powerful radio station transmitted from the US forces' Frankfurt HQ, broadcast tunes by Charles Parker and Miles Davis. "I was completely obsessed with their music," Minton says. "I wanted to be a jazz musician, I didn't want to work in the printing works, which was absolutely horrible: noisy, smelly, dirty. I had no interest in it at all."

It wasn't a proper apprenticeship, they just used me as a grease monkey, cleaning the ink off the machines."

"The big record for me was The Miles Davis Quintet, 'Cookin'' with Coltrane and Philly Joe Jones," he continues. "Miles was so exciting to me, Prestley sounded pedestrian, dreadful. It was supposed to be this 'rebellious' music, but for me, Philly Joe Jones and John Coltrane were the thing for me! This must've been 1966. I saw Rock Around The Clock, Little Richard was cool. He was something else. Fatso Domino I liked as well, the black singers. I didn't like the white stuff."

Minton's rejection of pop carried on into his professional life. Between 1966 and 1971, he was in Sweden, singer in a dance band. Minton didn't mind singing pop in the dance band with a repertoire of 700-plus songs – it was a way of extending his vocal skills – but he couldn't take the material seriously. "It was a job, he reasonably put," says Minton. "We travelled all over Lapland: pop hits and soul songs. I'd be jumping from voice to voice. I got really interested in vocal colour. I was never really into singing them like you believe it, but it seemed convincing, especially in a foreign country. To this day I still don't understand pop – why people fixate on some person. I was more interested in the process of singing, the form."

Minton's heart was in a free jazz quartet he ran with saxophonist Lars Gorn and flautist, but their repertoire of post-Coltrane dirges and freeform blowouts couldn't supply a living wage, and the album they recorded remained unreleased until 1999.

Returning to London meant reconnecting with Mike Westbrook, who he'd been working with before he left for Europe. Of course, the Mike Westbrook Band had been Minton's original bet on the metropolis – a bunch of young jazz firebrands from Plymouth Art School. The group included saxophonist Lou Gare and guitarist Keith Rowe – who left to form AMM with Eddie Prevost – and the brilliant baritone saxophonist John Surman, who won the Downbeat poll on his instrument.

"I met up with John Surman at a jam session in Devon," says Minton. "He told me he and Mike and Keith had moved to London and they were looking for a trumpet player. I packed up my job and moved to London, Tavistock Crescent, at off of Lombard Grove. There was the old Netting Hill days. John Surman and Keith Rowe had the basement flat, and I had a room upstairs. I used to do all my cooking down with them. We were all basically in one L-shaped room, quite a place. We did a few gigs around in London – the Marquee, the Mercury Theatre. Not very well paid."

"I did some BBC radio broadcasts with Westbrook in late 1971," he continues. "Also performances with the theatre troupe Welfare State. We called them 'happenings', perhaps a bit more organised than they had been in the 60s – theatrical events. We did a fantastic one at the Tower of London called Cosmic Cathedral. I remember Jeff Nuttall (the recently deceased poet, critic and author of Bomb Culture) walking around the battlements in his underpants ranting away, quite outrageous. There were complaints. We did another nice one in St John's Smith Square. I remember one reviewer saying, 'But it it jazz?' I was singing 'I Believe', and one of the actors was firing a helium balloon to me, and I was gradually being lifted off the floor. As I was singing, these two women came and put two mackerel in my mouth. Then an actor came on pretending to be blind with a walking stick – he smacked into the battlements, bursting them, and I came back to earth. But was it jazz?" laughs Minton.

What did the group think of Keith Rowe and Lou Gare leaving Westbrook to form AMM? "They just thought it wasn't for them," replies Minton. "Mike

was a composer, he was clear about that. The split actually happened when I was away in Sweden. AMM's ambient period had changed by 1971, they were doing the songs, [Cornelius] Cardew's 'reach the workers' period. The fire had gone out of the polemic about improvisation and how free it should be. Should you advertise a gig? if it's really free you might not want to play on the night. People used to talk like that."

It was while playing in Welfare State – a people's music collective led by John Fox, with musical direction by Mike Westbrook and then Lol Coxhill – that Minton met percussionist Roger Turner, and got back into improvisation. "At times," he remembers, "Welfare State became absolute improvisation – with Colin Wood and Lol and Roger. I remember one gig, nine o'clock in the morning in Aberystwyth in North Wales. I was completely on my own walking through the shopping centre. This was a suggestion by John Fox. I was in some weird costume, singing free improvisation as I walked through. No one was there to cheer me on. I thought: 'I'm not going to do this, I'll just walk through behaving normally. But I pushed myself, and it was amazing. It changed me, seeing that I could do that. It was shocking for people.'

Minton holds to the principles of populism and freedom and fun – street avant garde – which he learned in the 60s. His military survived the long Thatcher/Reagan winter of the 1980s, the beginning of which he dates to Grunwick in 1977, a famous labour dispute where the British left was pulverised. "Grunwick was a photo processing plant, employed a lot of Asian women, cheap labour, who wanted union recognition," he explains. "The bosses and the Labour government wouldn't let them have it. It was great, the miners and the post office workers coming out on strike for these Asian women. Keith was very committed. I saw AMM at the Grunwick demonstrations. I was still with Welfare then, in his brass band, and we played a benefit the day before the great picket was cancelled. I think something really significant happened there: the battle was lost. Some deal was done. That's when the miners' strike of 1984 was lost in my opinion, a historic moment. My wife asked me a while back, 'What happened at Grunwick?' I couldn't answer, 'I'd put it out of my mind, but it was a humiliating defeat.'"

The times got worse, but the music got better as the duo with Roger Turner progressed and Minton's array of vocal sounds increased. Minton appears to keep his absolute improvisation separate from his role as a singer of songs. Does he feel tempted to bring in tunes and songs when he's improvising, ironic citations of pre-modern kitsch to buck improv "dogma"? "We almost did bring in a tune once – by mistake!" he laughs. "No, it just seems like there's so many other things to do. Time's so short to bother with some remembered song. To be quite frank, I find it very hard once I'm into that improvising world to launch into a song. I'm into an abstract state."

How come such vivid, intense dialogue – total focus on the instant – produces such convincing arcs of long-term musical structure? "I don't know!" puzzles Minton. "I try not to think of anything. In most pure improvising situations, the only thing that would be discussed is the length of the piece, when we're going to stop. I don't like stopping, actually. I find the whole business of stopping and people banging their hands together pretty weird. What's going on? I suppose everything you do is about memories, but I do get to territories where I'm just supplying the air and it's happening on its own. I

listen back to things and think, 'How the hell did I do that?' People ask me for advice about how to get certain sounds and I tell them, 'I haven't got a fucking clue!'

Phil Minton's discourse is down to earth, stemming from experience rather than speculation or doctrine. Even so, he can teach, and does it by example. "Most musical education is directed at playing other people's music, composed music, whereas I got the idea somewhere along the line that it was wrong to copy – that it was wrong to copy Miles Davis, for example, which I could do quite well on trumpet. When the tune stops you've got to stop copying, get into this no man's land of improvising." Minton leads vocal workshops culminating in concerts, which London Improv's most assiduous documentarist Tim Fletcher describes as "fabulous". "We call it The Feral Choir," says Minton. "An organiser will advertise for people who want to be part of a three day workshop to explore their voices. I put together a piece for performance during that time. I've done it in Melbourne and Paris, and I'm flying to Poland for another one, 150 kids really concentrating on the pitches of their hiss, moving up and down... I love it."

At the end of the interview Minton is keen that I mention Toot, his trio with Alex Dornier and Thomas Lehn, and his body of work with pianist Varyan Weston, which includes *Songs From A Prison Diary*, a setting for 26 voices of Ho Chi Minh's poems. Here Minton sings 'straight'. To these ears, this side of his work reveals the error of Cornelius Cardew's Maoist overvaluation of traditional form as a political tool. Minton, however, remains thoroughly committed to it. He thinks of Ho Chi Minh as both freedom fighter and poet. A tour of Austria, France and Germany with an acoustic quartet comprising Weston, Turner and John Butcher on sax is planned for December. Although he developed his extended singing at a time when electronics were all the rage, he now prefers – if circumstances permit – to sing without a mic. He wants the immediacy and speed of an untreated, in-your-face performance.

"The problem with electronics," he explains, "is that you're using a dead energy in the first place – fossil fuel. What it they do when it's used up? Keith Rowe will be all right. I remember him in his Green days, when he used to play acoustic jazz guitar with Westbe."

Although it's the personal and bodily that interest Minton, he concedes that distinctions between real and electronic sound are spurious once you're listening to a CD. "I quite agree, I'd rather go to a live gig," he counters, continuing, "With [the label] ECM, you're starting to get this sound which is that of a studio rather than the musicians. Then on the other hand, a lot of record listeners really seem to like that. I think this has a lot to do with electronics at the moment, people prefer music in which they're not intimidated or challenged by the person."

To hear Minton improvising freely with a percussive genius like Roger Turner is to encounter a no man's land quite beyond the ken of either estate agents or Maoist state-capitalist regimes. Beauty is created, not by drowning out bodily anguish in the nostalgia triggered by echo and ambience, but by the collective and immediate realisation that nothing human is foreign to us. In an age of technofetishism, Minton's insistence on the expressive human body may appear old-fashioned, but as long as we're here to listen, the body is an encumbrance that won't go away. □



PHIL MINTON ON DISC

PHIL MINTON QUARTET WITH LARS GÖRAN ULANDER UP UMEÅ (BLUE TOWER) 1969

As John Corbett argues in his liner notes, this session, recorded in 1968 (but not released until 1999) at the national Swedish TV studio, is a fascinating document of European free jazz. Minton hasn't yet developed the tribal sonar and lightning speed of his later vocal work, but he hollers and trumpets with gusto. Minton's grandiose arrangements owe a debt to John Coltrane's *Africa/Brass*, but they have a special dignity too.

LOL COXHILL WELFARE STATE (VIRGIN) 1975

Worth investigating for the undying charm of Coxhill's farground arrangements and playing – wistful, dotty, plaintive, Minton is on half the tracks playing trumpet and singing. Coxhill's interest in superimposing different musics means that even Minton's straight singing becomes a welcome addition.

THE FERALS RUFF (LEC) 1986

A stunning (and appropriately named) quartet: Minton and Turner with Alan Tomlinson (trombone) and Hugh Davies (electronic), opening up complete new vistas of relentless, ethering four-way interaction. The four performers combine to form a single entity, though the rusted wire skeleton of this wild and kinky animal is evidently provided by Roger Turner's percussion.

PHIL MINTON

A DOUGHNUT IN ONE HAND (FMP) 1988

Although easier to find than his impossibly rare solo debut *A Doughnut In Both Hands* (RHR 1981), this is still more amazing, both in terms of voice and recording. Minton moves around his own vocal apparatus, showing us what infinitudes of music can lie in such infantile postures as belches, gurgles, babbling, screeches and screams. This recording at the Friends Meeting House in Welwyn Garden City will no doubt end up being used for horror film soundtracks, but the 'insane' element is simply that the music is not ashamed of the performer's body.

PHIL MINTON & ROGER TURNER

DADA DA (LEC) 1983

Dada tributes are normally pallid affairs, but this soundtrack would have reduced the Cabaret Voltaire to wined silence. The sheer range of the music makes the paraphernalia of musical production – from orchestria to samplers – redundant. Minton and Turner extract music from unexpected sources in the way Kurt Schwitters found poetry in rusty gram wheels, tincan tops and sweet wrappers. A child's crown adorns the cover.

PHIL MINTON QUARTET

MOUThFuLL OF EcStASy (VICTO) 1996

Minton and Turner with John Butcher on saxophones and Vervan Weston on piano. The text is James Joyce's

Finnegans Wake. Minton alternates between straight song (Joyce loved Irish-born American tenor John McCormack's voice) and vocalese, with probably too much of the former for fans of Minton's extremes.

PHIL MINTON/JOHN BUTCHER/ERHARD HIRT TWO CONCERTS (FMP) 1997, REC 1996

Two live concerts from Vandœuvre and Antwerp, with John Butcher on saxophones and Erhard Hirt on guitar and electronics. A word landscape of scapes and squeaks, so eloquently fused that people who haven't seen the live show assume it's an especially suggestive piece of electronics.

NO SPAGHETTI EDITION

PASTA VARIATIONS (SOFA) 2002

A troupe of Norwegian improvisers led by Oslo's legat Zach (percussion) and Ivar Grydeland (guitar) with Minton and Pål Thomas from Britain: wild, loopy, experimental – the ensemble deliberately unravels before your ears. Hardly an essential Sofa release, but fans of Ground Zero should investigate.

PHIL MINTON & ROGER TURNER

DRAINAGE (EMANEM) 2003

Astonishing double CD package comprising four studio and concert encounters from 1988, 2002 and 2003; a manifesto for the Minton/Turner aesthetic, with a breadth of sonic reference which is staggering.

PHIL MINTON & GÜNTER CHRISTMANN

IFOR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS

(CONCEPTS OF DOING/EXPLO) 2003
Recorded in Hannover (birthplace of Kurt Schwitters) Günther Christmann's unbelievably agile trombone and cello extract a similar level of improvised vocalese (multiphonics, timbral contrasts, cheer lunacy) achieved in Minton's encounters with Roger Turner. Towering modern art at odds with everyone else's plumb line.

4WALLS

WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON (RED NOTE) 2003

Graced with a startling drawing from the Penzance Collection, the CD's line-up – Minton with Luc B. on bass and Michael Vatcher on drums, plus Vervan Weston on piano – promises high-powered electro-schizophrenia, but there's a lot of Minton's straight singing. Unfortunately, this writer is allergic to drawing room Stalinism. Words by Paul Haines and Ho Chi Minh.

POIRE Z + PHIL MINTON

O (FOR 4 EARS) 2004

Minton meets the electronic improvisers Günter Müller, eskim, Norbert Möslang and Andy Gah! live at the Musique Action Festival in Vandœuvre-les-Nancy in May 2002. Despite the agility of the other improvisers, or perhaps because of their reliance on loops and textures, Minton emerges as the active intelligence, although he sounds so at home in the electronic forest, you have to listen for him. □



FREE



WITH THEIR NEW ALBUM *A GHOST IS BORN*
CO PRODUCED BY JIM O'ROURKE, FORMER ALT COUNTRY
OUTFIT WILCO COMPLETE THE TRANSITION BEGUN ON
THEIR BREAKTHROUGH *YANKEE HOTEL FOXTROT* INTO FULL
BLOWN ELECTRONIC ROCK EXPERIMENTALISTS.
LEADER JEFF TWEEDY TALKS EDWIN POUNCEY THROUGH THE
CHANGES, WHICH INCLUDE RECRUITING IMPROV
GUITARIST NELS CLINE AND DRUMMER GLENN KOTCHE
TO THEIR CURRENT TOURING GROUP
PHOTOGRAPHY: JORN HOOPER

SPRIT

"If I played you all the Wilco songs in chronological order on an acoustic guitar they probably wouldn't sound that different," declares Wilco leader Jeff Tweedy. "What has become more interesting to me, though, is that as these simple songs continue to come out of me I've also been able to tap into my unconscious. I'm always happiest with a song when I feel it came from some place that I couldn't reach intellectually without having art and music to help me get there. The exciting part of being involved with Wilco during the last few records has been to be able to transfer that unconscious state into the overall band, where we use the songs as skeletons to hang different ideas on. Then we pull the skeleton out and get rid of it."

As long strange trips go, they don't come much stranger than the journey undertaken by Chicago group Wilco, from their alt Country roots in Tweedy's former outfit Uncle Tupelo to the transatlantic krautrock, machine drums and exquisite studio hatched electronic rock of their new album *A Ghost Is Born*. Wilco are that rarity, a moderately successful group who successfully grew bigger as they got weirder and better. Their musical growth has not been without risk. Much to its embarrassment now, their former label Reprise made them walk when they refused to make any changes to their breakthrough experimental album *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* (2002), midwived by Jim D'Aniello. The group got the album back, streamed it on the Internet, where Wilco attained heroic status on discussion boards the Web over for sticking to their guns. The Wilco line-up has necessarily evolved to keep pace with the changes. Drummer and experimental musician Glenn Kotche replaced Ken Coomer during the making of *MTV*, and for their Ghost tour Wilco recruited improvisational guitarist Nels Cline, who has worked with Quartet Music, Greg Bendian's Interzone, The Geraldine Fibbers, Scornella and Carle Bouzlik, as well as leading his own Nels Cline Trio and The Nels Cline Singers – the latter's latest CD *The Giant Pin* has just been released on Cryptogramophone. For Cline, being in Wilco is a revelation. "What Jeff really has in mind when he asks somebody like me to come in is a subversion of the genre," he says.

On their previous guitarist Leroy Bach left Wilco amicably to do a music thing called *Project 333*, "remarks Tweedy, about Cline joining. "As a result I started playing more electric guitar than I had in the past and I felt it would be worth asking Nels if he wanted to join the band. I've known him for a little over eight years since meeting him on tour when he was playing with The Geraldine Fibbers, and I always thought that's one guy who I wish I could play guitar like."

"There are songs that are extremely stark and sparse, together with the bluster of distorted armies of guitar sound," represses Cline. "There's all of that, and throughout my career I've always naturally gravitated towards diversity in style." Cline, who has played with all of this is home out when I catch up with Wilco live at Portsmouth's Wedgewood Rooms, a few days before their appearance at Glastonbury Festival. With a line-up that includes Cline, new keyboard player Pat Sansone, drummer Glenn Kotche, Mikael Jorgensen on piano and laptop, plus veteran Wilco bassist John Stirratt, leader Jeff Tweedy now finds himself among the most imaginative musical company in Wilco's somewhat tempestuous career. Throughout their two hour set, Wilco seamlessly fuse pop, rock and improvisation. Pushed along by Tweedy's stream of consciousness lyrics, the group carefully launch themselves into vast drumming chasms without ever losing direction. At one point Cline and Tweedy's guitars dash in an improvisational embrace that

flourishing flashes back to punk's glory days. But the true glory of new Wilco is the nervous applause that follows their staging of one of *A Ghost Is Born*'s two uncompromisingly experimental tracks, "Spiders (Kicksnake)", a warped krautrock workout which, on a conductor's nod from Tweedy, suddenly jumps into a stadium rock exercise that causes the entire front row to reach for their air guitars.

"I think we're Jeff Tweedy's orchestra," laughs Cline. "One of the satisfying things about this group is that it's orchestrally dynamic."

"In many ways the new Wilco lineup has already made *A Ghost Is Born* obsolete in my mind," enthuses Tweedy. "And I can't wait to start making the next one. The architecture of the line-up we have right now is completely designed to pursue the basic philosophies we've been attempting to get across for a long time."

On the eve of Wilco's *A Ghost Is Born* tour, Jeff Tweedy checked himself in to a Chicago rehab centre to kick his addiction to the prescription painkillers he was taking to combat migraine headaches. Thankfully the condition, along with the related panic attacks, appears to be history for the man who ambles into the hotel conference room and seats himself at its big table. He apologises for the tattered sandwich he's just ordered, explaining that he hasn't eaten all day. Tweedy is wearing the same crooked front baseball cap he wore onstage the night before – apparently it was picked out for him by his eight year old son Spencer, who, he proudly says, is following in his dad's footsteps by playing drums in The Blasters. Tweedy's crooked cap chimes well with the work of Gladys Nilsson, of the late 1980s Chicago art group Harry Who, whose drawings inside the *A Ghost Is Born* booklet illuminate the record's fascination for the animal kingdom. "I looked inside her art," Tweedy declares, "and every time I looked at her picture of two creatures with lolling bodies [in the booklet's centrepiece] it really seemed to express a lot of what the record was about to me. All of her drawings evoke what was going on on the record. Everything and of looks a little bit like a bee or a bird, but not quite."

"I was trying to write from the perspective of animals and bugs to subvert some sort of first person narrative," he continues. "Of course, it ends up being more personal than anything else."

Ever since he first drove to avoid his punk group The Primates (apart from to avoid problems with a marginally better known British group called The Primitives) as a teenager in Belleville, Illinois seeking to emulate his hero Mike Watt, Tweedy has been pursuing a personal muse. That pursuit picked up momentum after the breakup of his alt Country group Uncle Tupelo, in which he was overshadowed by songwriting partner Jay Farrar. Soon after their demise, Tweedy regrouped with Uncle Tupelo's bass guitarist John Stirratt, dobro and steel player Max Johnston and drummer Ken Coomer, to form Wilco. In 1995 they moved to Chicago and signed a deal with Reprise Records on the strength of Uncle Tupelo's success. Their alt Country rock leanings are still clearly audible on Wilco's debut, *AM* (1999). They followed it a year later with the more ambitious double album *Being There*, on which they were joined by guitarist Jay Bennett. The first strains of Tweedy's avant leanings leak through on the opening "Misunderstood", whose resonating guitar and violin introduction instantly peels back the ears, retreating them to hear the deeply grooved experimental pulses throbbing beneath the surface of the album's deceptively simple pop songs. By *Summertime* (1999), Bennett's complex and flamboyant arrangements of

Tweedy's increasingly intricate and menacing lyrics were woven with subliminal references to Sinead O'Brien Wilton and Big Star's supremely damaged Seder Levons. With *Summertime* Wilco were learning to use the recording studio as an instrument – for Tweedy, an ambivalent advance. "My early experiences in the recording studio made me very suspicious of it," he sighs. "I didn't understand how it worked and this resulted in outsiders having more impact on the way we sounded on records than we did. In Uncle Tupelo we were almost pariahs in our approach to recording, we rarely did overdubs, except on our second album. In our opinion the only way we could retain our musical purity was by creating lyrics ourselves. We looked at being in the studio as writing more of a documentary artifact. I still believe in that to a degree. I think you do and end up being more creative and innovative with less."

"A lot of modern recording creates the illusion that you have infinite possibilities at your fingertips," he continues, "but I don't want infinite possibilities. All that results in is endless decision making, and that's not an acceptable creative process for me." Even so, he concedes, "It was the first record where we began to use overdubs and finally came to terms with multitrack recording techniques."

For all Tweedy's reservations, *Summertime*'s favourable reception encouraged the group to break their habit of essentially treating albums as studio recorded performances. Indeed, the making of its successor, *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*, couldn't be further removed from that notion. Its lengthy studio gestation involved experimenting with and amassing so many textures and parts that they ended up bringing in Jim D'Aniello to assist with its birth. The protracted rebirth of onetime alt Country specialists Wilco into electronic rockers was not without casualties. It saw the loss of Tweedy's melodically signed guitar partner Jay Bennett and long-serving drummer Ken Coomer.

In the period they took to make *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*, finally released in 2002, Wilco completed two volumes of *Marmad Avenue*, their collaboration with UK singer/songwriter Billy Bragg, on which they scored arrangements for the unfinished songs of folk guru Woody Guthrie; and in December 2000, Tweedy embarked on a series of solo acoustic shows, during which he invited experimental musician and drummer Glenn Kotche up onstage to play with him.

"The first time I realised that I wasn't going to feel right playing with any other drummer was when I did an acoustic thing called *Project 333* with Glenn Cline and Tweedy. "He had shown up at the gig and rather than get up on stage alone with an acoustic guitar again I asked him if he felt like playing with me. We brought a little drum kit from my studio, set it up on stage, and he played the whole set with me. It felt like he had been playing the songs for years. There was just so much communication between us going down."

Tweedy's enthusiasm for Kotche's playing finally drove out drummer Coomer, who was finding it difficult to come to terms with Wilco's new direction. "We had a good rapport," confirms Kotche. "From the beginning I was encouraged to exert my own sound as opposed to replacing what Ken Coomer had done. Ken's traditional rock drumming technique wasn't really working on *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*, which had been envisioned with soundscapes and stuff. At that time I'd quit playing in rock bands altogether to concentrate on more experimental material. When I joined Wilco I was encouraged to bring all my little sounds with me." Kotche arrived at a critical point in the group's existence, when they brought in another guitarist Leroy Bach; and, to add to the confusion, Tweedy had agreed to let him make and Wilco fan Sam Jones

document them attempting to get *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* back on track—as seen in the film *I Am Trying To Break Your Heart* (2002).

"The group had been recording *YHF* for almost a year before I came in," continues Kotche. "Many of the songs were not happening, so they tried different versions where they would build the tracks on top of each other. I added layers of drumming and percussion which, as a result, triggered off new overdubs." The major obstacle to the full realization of Wilco's new direction, however, was guitarist Bennett, who sat out to savor in as many pop elements as the mix could take. For Tweedy, who was left to mould them into some sort of shape, the situation was becoming unbearable. "He was expecting me to make decisions out of loyalty which is not the way it works," groans Tweedy. "In my opinion it had to be what sounded best. During the final stages of recording *YHF* I had really reached the end of my rope with trying to work with Jay. I knew it wasn't going to work, and I also knew that someone else would have to become involved in order to finish the record."

Eventually they brought in sonic scientist Jim O'Rourke to somehow pull the album together. As soon as O'Rourke began mixing the album, Tweedy was convinced that they had made the right decision. "We missed the song 'I Am Trying To Break Your Heart', and from that point on it felt ridiculous to try and make the rest of the record work with anybody else," he enthuses. "Finally I was working with someone who was totally sympathetic to the things I wanted to hear."

"At that point *YHF* was complete chaos," concurs Kotche, "but when we turned it over to Jim he miraculously managed to make the layers of different sounds into pop songs. He's really brilliant at letting the song evolve while he's mixing. None of those mixes is fat and each version of every song has a new scene change. That's what gives the album its character. It has different parts from different points in the band's career running through it." What distinguishes *YHF* from previous Wilco albums is its masterful blending of sampled noise and electronic effects into the group's bubbling pop. It's tempting to assume that this is the handwork of outsider O'Rourke. "Everybody thinks that he added the experimental element to the record," sighs Kotche, "but what he actually did was to scale everything back to the bare bones before adding different elements from previous layers."

"All the word elements were already there," confirms Tweedy. "But Jim knew how to work with the mix and highlight it. More important was his ability to pull things out to make the song structures become apparent again. Sometimes making a successful song shape meant that the original chords had to be pulled out because they weren't as exciting or inviting to our ears as the things that had been layered on top of them. When the musical guts were pulled out of it, the added noise took on a more solid shape and became part of the basic architecture of the song. This obscured the original chord changes and made them more interesting."

The process of salvaging *YHF* from the mountains of material they amassed for it strained the group's relationship with guitarist Bennett to breaking point. "Jay was acting in this weird way, like he was second in command," sighs Tweedy uncomfortably. "He was saying things like, 'Well, if I hear him [O'Rourke] do a pop song, and it's cool, then I'll sign off.' But nobody's asking you to sign off. What are you talking about? This sounds fucking awesome! So he didn't become involved at all in the mixing of *YHF*. Shortly

after that we decided that we couldn't work with him any more."

To make things worse, Reprise rejected the finished album and demanded unspecified changes. Wilco refused, only to be ejected from the label. What did Reprise find so objectionable about *YHF*? "I'm still really curious about that too," puzzles Tweedy. "Every record we made for Reprise has been problematic for them. AM was too Country. Being There was a double album, that's a problem. Summer Teeth: why isn't it Country any more? *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*, 'That's it! We can't work with you guys any more.' Their goalposts were constantly shifting."

"Another thing that's really mystifying to me is how some people think Wilco are so weird," he continues. "*Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* was the most contemporary and straightforward record we had ever made. To me it sounded like a further step forward from the things we were trying to do on *Summer Teeth*, but not so that it became inaccessible."

Undaunted by the rejection of what many now consider their finest work, Wilco finally walked away from their Reprise deal with a \$50,000 pay-off and the tapes for *YHF*, which they streamed on the Internet and took to the road to promote the material. The subsequent attention resulted in *YHF* being licensed to Nonesuch—like Reprise, a division of AOL Time Warner. The album went on to sell 450,000 copies, fully vindicating the group's commitment to experiment. Tweedy chuckles at the irony. "Our attitude towards Reprise was, we were never signed to a contract that stated we have to make records which adhere to your preconceptions."

Wilco had already begun work on *A Ghost Is Born*, with Jim O'Rourke mixing, co-producing and contributing various instrumental parts, while they were touring *YHF*. Tweedy had fashioned a specific musical template for "Spiders (Kidsmoke)", using a forgotten computer program complete with a built-in drum machine. "I started programming drum beats and came up with something that really reminded me of New and that motorik style of Krautrock," he recalls. "I thought it would be exciting to see what could happen with it, so I made some demo for the song using an acoustic guitar and the drum machine."

"When we got in the studio, though, the problems we knew were there with the song really became apparent. There were too many melodic elements for it really to be a Krautrock style, it had too many chord changes. If we were really going to go for this motorik style it had to sound more hypnotic, so we pulled out all the chords and just left it in the key of E. That's all we originally intended to do with it but as we were playing the song the 'Van Halen' part of the previous version was thrown in because it fit so perfectly." The 'Van Halen' part Tweedy's talking about is a gloriously over-the-top riff that could have been played by the group in "shiny shiny pants" at the centre of the sweetly sardonic *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* song, "Heavy Metal Drummer". The evident joy Wilco derive in performing it live and on record vividly reveals how they never set out to gain their vanguard position by sacrificing the rock 'n' roll pleasures that seal "Spiders (Kidsmoke)" as a landmark track in *A Ghost Is Born*'s sonic evolution. However the album's highlight is "Less Than You Think", a sardonically self-descriptive song that steadily mushrooms into a 15-minute drone improvisation. "The song came from a spontaneous Tweedy 'and... In my opinion, it always sounded true because there wasn't enough there. I wanted it to be a song that talked about itself, only it never felt like it could quite get there. We originally

thought it would be a funny idea to have the longest song on the record called 'Less Than You Think', so on one level it was exciting to attempt to make the epic. Then the idea came about that, since the song is a meditation on free will, why don't we finish it without any human interaction. So we set up an installation and recorded different instruments playing themselves in a room for as long as we could stand it. Then we returned, changed them slightly and recorded it again. We did this for 30 minutes and threw in the original song. When it got to the end of the song we did a live performance mix that felt like the right length."

The song, with its drone explorations, finally catches up with and consolidates a longstanding fascination of Tweedy's for experimental music predating his student days, listening to John Cage and Morton Feldman records in his college library. "I also went out and bought John Cage's book *Silence*," he adds, "which was as influential to me as hearing his music."

Through books like *Silence* I began to find the things of the avant-garde in literature as well."

Indeed, long before he had the confidence to let it show in Uncle Tupelo and Wilco, Tweedy's experimental bent first revealed itself through his youthful games with home recording equipment. "My dad had a very early karaoke machine which used eight-track tapes. You could record yourself and then transfer the recording on to a cassette. I would use this machine to make my own eight-track tapes and just dub back and forth on it—like the most primitive two-track system in the world—making sound installations in my room. I would record these long, droning bowed bass things, or rattly glass and trashcans for hours on end. That's all I would do in my spare time. It was totally nuts."

"I had a lot of misconceptions about experimental music and noise, even though it was something I was extremely passionate about," Tweedy continues. "What I adhered to early on was this idea that if you were going to be an artist you had to learn how to draw really well before you could start subverting the forms. I now think that's a really damaging way to look at creativity."

Fortunately, the current Wilco personnel share Tweedy's fluency with the liberating play of machines given their own head. "I have such a fond memory of the end section of 'Less Than You Think', affirms keyboardist Mikael Jorgensen, just returned from his mother's funeral in time to begin Wilco for their Glasnostbury festival appearance. "We were in the control room, hearing how it sounded in the studio through the control room monitors. Then I remember having this delicious treat of being able to go back into the live room—after having got used to how it sounds as a two-track mix. To actually be able to step out, walk through it and hear the difference was fantastic. Because that's not going to happen ever again."

"To me, all those conceptual reasons for it being on the finished record are great," agrees Tweedy, "but none of it would have made any sense to me if I didn't honestly believe it was beautiful. That's my favourite song on the record."

He leans back, his attention momentarily distracted by his now cold toasted sandwich. "I prefer it cold anyway," he laughs, concluding "I was listening to the track while driving around Chicago, so that I could sequence the finished album—and the city suddenly started looking different. I think it's always the best sign when you're listening to something that causes your environment to take on a different feel or shape." □ *A Ghost Is Born* is out now on Nonesuch



THE PRIMER: noise

A BI-MONTHLY GUIDE TO THE CORE RECORDINGS
OF A PARTICULAR ARTIST OR GENRE

THIS MONTH, DAVID KEENAN REMOVES HIS EARPLUGS AND CRANKS THE STEREO UP TO INFINITY AS HE PLUNGES INTO THE VORTEX OF NOISE MUSIC, FROM THE EARLY FEEDBACK EXPERIMENTS OF LOU REED VIA INDUSTRIAL GRIND TO TODAY'S DIGITAL SOUND ABUSERS.
ILLUSTRATION: SAVAGE PENCIL



If pop is music is daytime, a new to five soundtrack negotiating work and conversation, then noise is its night, populated by the squat shapes and inchoate shadows of desire and alienating despair. In contrast to music manufactured under the surveillance glare of pop, noise provides a cover of dark that encourages both experimentation and criminal acts. Noise generates the perfect conditions for interrogating control and jamming its channels. Noise is the meltdown of logic. And it refuses the notion that everything is consensual, that communication is paramount, that music must be about pleasure. That's why the noise of artists like Throbbing Gristle, Boyd Rice and Whitehouse is so often associated with strongly images of transgressive sex, power and violence.

Lutz Ruckelshaus is widely credited as being the first major noise theorist with his 1913 *Art Of Noises* manifesto. And, of course, composers like Arnold Schoenberg, John Cage and Karlheinz Stockhausen played their part in breaking with classically established harmonic systems. As Cage himself noted, in the sleeve notes to his 1942 collaboration with the poet and author Kenneth Patchen, *The City Wears A Silhouette*. "In writing for these sounds, as in writing for percussion instruments alone, the composer is dealing with material that does not fit into the orthodox scales and harmonies. It is therefore necessary to find some other organizing means than those in use for symphonic instruments. As more experimental orchestras are established and as more composers enter this field, more of its problems will be solved."

Lou Reed's epochal *Metal Machine Music* signposted a way of breaking free of the impasse created by the endgames of the mid-20th century avant garde, simultaneously functioning as a critique of music and as a means of its rehabilitation. But contemporary noise artists like the New Blockaders and Emuzeitende Neubauten were the first to progress from the use of noise as assault on tonality to the development of a rich, complex language capable of subtleties of shade and nuance without sacrificing any of its ferrel power or ability to unlock repressed personae in the listener.

Shatter the harmony and you shatter the social structure, goes one noise dictum. Opposed to control, it follows that noise always contains the seeds of its own destruction. From Throbbing Gristle's peremptory posturing to Laibach's totalitarian pastiche, noise seemingly embraces notions of discipline, regimentation and control, the better to understand and undermine them. If noise seemingly encourages an appetite for destruction, it's only out of a desire to liberate a repressed appetite for reconstruction.

Many contemporary artists have used noise as a functional base, from free jazz through the conceptual sound art of The Sonic Arts Union and the laminal improvisations of AMM and MELV. It has also thoroughly infected and reimagined rock music, thanks to artists like Mars, John Zorn, Fushitsusha and Sonic Youth, all of whom helped to bring noise out of the dark and into the light. But this Primer is about those artists who bypass genre conventions in their wholesale embrace of noise.

LOU REED METAL MACHINE MUSIC

NCA CO 1975

"If you ever thought feedback was the best thing that ever happened to guitars," wrote Lester Bangs in an

appreciation of *Metal Machine Music* that ran in *Creech* in 1976, "well, Lou just got rid of the guitars." Lou Reed's 1975 solo album is the noise album par excellence, a blueprint for the deluge to come. All future noise tropes are already present and incorrect: the artificial extension of the medium through the use of locked grooves as cycles to infinity, the manipulation of the protesting screams of overdriven electronics and the usurpation of uniformly unvarying stereo balance in favour of telescoping zooms of volume that surge like tower blocks from ear to ear.

At times Reed has talked of *Metal Machine Music* as being completely self-generating, a closed feedback system that he simply sets into motion and occasionally tweaked; at others he has straight-faced insisted that he "coded" it with quotes from Mozart and Beethoven. Either way, it's worth recalling that Reed was one of the earliest rock musicians to use noise as visceral colour. The Velvet Underground's second album *White Light/White Heat* (1968) was the place where conventional music hierarchies were first torched. The 17 minute "Sister Ray" progressed from a monolithic three chord R&B jam into a four way face-off, with each player raising the volume stakes to the point where the whole piece became gridlocked by feedback. But the moment when rock really took monolithy, off-pitches and the death pangs of malfunctioned equipment as the basis of a whole new syntax comes during Reed's guitar solo on "I Heard Her Call My Name" from the same LP. Initiated by Reed's famous cry of "And then my mind split open", his noise solo, achieved through the use of a hand-held Vox distortion box, incorporates notes that sound as if they're cracking under the pressure of distortion, with any notion of melody forced to take a backseat to fuzz, friction and volume. In noise terms, "I Heard Her Call My Name" is the splitting of the atom. *Metal Machine Music* is the resultant meltdown.

THE LOS ANGELES FREE MUSIC SOCIETY

THE LOWEST FORM OF MUSIC

RECORDED ON THE CRITICAL FORMATION 10800 1975-1984

Read their name as a manifesto. The Los Angeles Free Music Society set out to liberate music from the tyrannical demands of melody, structure, rhythm and associated ideas of performance. Through DIY street events and radio happenings they conflated punk aesthetics and high art theory, and with their invention and deployment of homemade noise generators like Tom Reiche's "Mock Cello" and "Strung-on-one" they aligned themselves with a tradition of American instrument builder-composers stretching back to Harry Partch and Harry Partch.

Loading the assault were career wordies Le Forte Four, whose insane 1975 LAFMS debut, *Bikini Time*, takes up most of the second CD of this world-beating ten disc overview of one of the profoundest and most valuable of American noise cultures. Le Forte Four were founded on the electronic experiments of Rick Potts and Chip Chapman, who by the time of their first LP had been joined by Joe and Tom Potts. With its relatively self-explanatory highlights like "Some Problem With The Cord Or Something", "What Do You Do, Radiator?" and "Fade It Out", *Bikini Time* Shoes is an archetypal slice of benign LAFMS subversion. But LAFMS affiliates like Arway and Smeagmo were the ones who built upon the charmed foundations. Arway's 1978 album *Liv At LACE*, included in the box, is one of the Society's heaviest interventions, with Dennis

Duck's autistic saxophone, Rick Potts's mandolin, Vette's post-Yoko Ono vocals, Juan Gomez's bass and Tom Reiche's rocking drums illuminated in flashes of far-thick electricity courtesy of Joe Potts and Chip Chapman's primitively reamed crotchy.

"Music without musicians was the idea," claims Joe Suk Reed Meets, vocalist in Smeagmo, whose regressive noise/jazz/rock hybrid *Glimour Gm! 1941 LP* (1979) is a leveling slice of post-rock sound well before that term became shorthand for indie pop with chops. The cover featured a great collage of a starlet in a gameskin. As Chip Chapman explains: "We saw the future, we knew how it would smell, we got it out of our system and we got upended before it stank."

THROBBING GRISTLE RAT CLUB, PINDAR, LOS ANGELES 22/5/1977

MUTE CD

RAT CLUB, VALENTINO ROOMS, LOS ANGELES 17/12/1977

MUTE CD

ZYKLON B ZOMBIE/UNITED

INDUSTRIAL P 1978

Operating out of London between 1975-81, Throbbing Gristle were the first group to fully realise noise's ability to defuse and disrupt systems of control and to provide a release for powerful psychic and sexual energies. In accordance, they set up their live shows as magical rituals where rudimentary musicianship, aggressive machine noise, merrons, suspect tapes, strobes and industrial son generators combined to short-circuit the traditional mono-directional performer/audience relationship. Whereas punk was essentially recuperative, hijacking and redeeming tired rock modes, TG worked towards the destruction of music as a precursor to the reintegration of art and life. The Rat Club live recordings, drawn from the TG24 box set that bundled audio-cassette tapes of their first 24 live shows, are their purest manifestation.

TG noise camouflage deliberately ambiguous traces of conversations between children and adults. These are given a disturbing slant thanks to the murderous and misogynist lyrics that brackets them, while Genesis P. Orridge's deliberately wacky vocals mirror the ceaseless noise of the media, cutting together the more chaotic of sensational headlines with mocking effluvia and lurid accounts of sex and serial murder. Casey Fanni Tutti uses her guitar as a noise generator, traditional rock machismo undermined by a woman who can't "play", while Chris Carter's homemade electronics, including an early prototype sampler, allows them access to an unnaturally exaggerated range of sounds.

Modelled after The Velvet Underground's "I Heard Her Call My Name", "Zyklon B Zombie" was the B side of the 1978 single "United". It's also featured on the Mute CD Second Annual Report. Named after the chemical used in Nazi death chambers, the track was deliberately recorded to sound as if it was being heard through a tunnel of fumes. P.Orridge's caw-raising vocal traced Reed's pre-emptive "mind split open" cry for "And then my head split open", followed by the gurgling single-note death of a cheap synthesizer.

BORBETOMAGUS SAUTER, DIETRICH, MILLER

AGNOSTIC CO 1981

The trio of Borbetomagus, featuring saxophonists Jim Sauter and Don Dietrich with guitarist Donald Miller, are the most excessive group of free improvisers ever to breathe into brass. Their very physical



Borbetomagus (above);
Throbbing Gristle (right)



performances are routinely described in terms of muscle and sublimated homophobia, largely down to the onstage action. But clearly there's a lot more going on. Borbetomagus use noise to clear a real-time space within which the armour of personality can dissolve like candyfloss, leaving them free to assemble a meaningful syntax from volume, speed and texture. With microphones sunk deep in the bells of their saxophones, Sauter and Dietrich — friends since kindergarten — look home like rutting moose, their tempers producing lightning forms close to Albert Ayler's vision of ecstatic heavenly music. Augmented with rubber hosing and electric tubes that extend their reach, both saxophones are fed through racks of distortion effects, while Miller plays his guitar flat on its back, exciting it with toys, radios, metal bars and marbles.

The group's third LP *Sauter, Dietrich, Miller* bundles a clutch of insane live shows. Pick of the bunch is the tape from Bergen Community College in 1981, where they promptly levelled a frybait cheese and wine party. The barbaric electric sound of their horns comes over like a live cable forced down the beer-guzzled throats of unsuspecting college sports fans. "What was that," demands one, "a tune-up?" The CD also includes some choice documentation of their brief incursion as a four piece, with Brian Doherty's live electronics adding another terminal layer of colour.

BOYD RICE THE BLACK ALBUM

MUTE LP 1977

NON PAGAN MUZAK

MUTE P 1988

For Californian prankster and provocateur Boyd Rice, noise functions as a cathartic spit-switch. His early work is mostly based on loops assembled from obscure exotica, pop and easy listening records, cut up and reconfigured to highlight neuroses normally held in check by therapeutic structures. Recorded in 1975, the self-released *The Black Album* can be played at any speed. Its queasy, growling loops resemble motion-sick carnival tunes, all accurring ominous intent through brain-boring repetition. "I think I created something that blanks out your brain, leaving a vacuum and allowing new thoughts to form," Rice explains. "I wanted to create something that would run all the thought out of people's heads... I wanted to create a form of stimulus that would bypass the mind, a form not rooted in the mind that would hopefully give rise to an experience more primal in nature. I wanted to do something directed toward the organism as a whole."

1978's *Pagan Muzak* is credited to Rice's Non alter-ego, and it remains the most inspired noise single ever recorded — not to mention the longest, with each track running until its locked groove gives out. You'd need a degree in advanced maths to work out the number of ways you can hear its 37 locked grooves playable at 16, 33, 45 and 78 rpm speeds on either of two centre holes.

EINSTÜRZENDE NEUBAUTEN KALTE STERNE: EARLY RECORDINGS 1980-82

MUTE CD 20304

"DAS SCHABEN" FROM HALBER MENSCH POTSDAM CD 1985

Berlin's Einstürzende Neubauten were one of the first modern noise groups to assemble an instrumental

armory from almost entirely non-musical sources, instead using the noise of the city itself: sisschermers, drills, etc. Andrew Urruh, the group's main instrument inventor, built huge percussive constructions from scavenged industrial parts, metal springs, bins and rusty power tools.

Their early work, as documented on the *Kalte Sterne* compilation covering 1980-82, is extremely pared down, most of it studio treated metal-on-metal harshness. Although for much of the disc they're still exploring the question of what to do with metal besides hammering it, their solutions are never less than thrilling. Bina Borge's vocals incorporate staccato, strangled throat noises and guttural ones, while Urruh and FM Emmet sand, drill and pound scrub. With its spliced radio snippets, "Tageschau-Dub" is the closed-circuit sound of pre-unification Berlin. The city's solution helped fuel the experimental music scene's sense of itself as a covert operation turning the tools of the state against itself.

Originally a bonus 7" that came with 1985's *Halber Mensch* and resurrected in its nine minute glory on the latest CD reissue, the aptly titled "Das Schaben" ("The Scraping") is a preliminary sketch for "Der Tot Ist Ein Dandy". This beautifully obtuse example of the sophisticated tonal palette that Neubauten had early on evolved from the sound of scraped metal highlights the way they supercharge and embrace metal sonorities, predating the flesh-metal organ of later Japanese noise.

WHITEHOUSE DEDICATED TO PETER KURTEN

SUGAN LAMMY CD 1941

Widely hailed as the *Never Mind The Bollocks* of noise, Whitehouse's fourth album made explicit the parallels between society's assault on musical structure and devout criminality. Kurten was a notorious serial murderer and sadist who was executed in Germany in 1931, after confessing to the murders of 68 adults and children. On the way to the gallotine, he purportedly asked, "Tell me, after my head has been chopped off, will I still be able to hear, at least for a moment, the sound of my own blood gushing from the stump of my neck? That would be the pleasure to end all pleasures."

By dedicating the album to Kurten and including "Ripper Territory," about the arrest of UK serial killer Peter Sutcliffe, Whitehouse cast noise as the cover of truth that facilitates such atrocities. Whitehouse, then the son of William Bennett, Peter McKay and Paul Reuter, set the album as a sonic imaging of the interior landscapes of a serial murderer, with the aural withdrawal implicit in noise here emblematic of a profound failure to connect.

If there's a heavy dose of misanthropy to Whitehouse, there's a counterbalance of grief, and although *Dedicated To Peter Kurten* is unrelentingly bleak, it's also one of the most anguished noise records ever. Like its harrowing follow-up, *Süchenwald*, it feels like a wake for liberal humanist notions of humanity in the face of murder, rape, power, violence and abuse. Dedicated To Peter Kurten lines up with those works of art that refuse to be palliatives, that exhaust solutions and instead pose unanswerable questions. It also highlights the emotionally and morally manipulative aspects of art and the way it mediates, and thus reduces or skewers experience. In other contexts, say Death Metal, it may be possible to react to its subject matter in a 'neutral' way, the

celebratory, cathartic nature of the music neutralising its connection with the reality of murdered children and the horrific suffering of their families. But Whitehouse don't permit you to experience *Dedicated To Peter Kurten* on that level. Harsh electronic sounds jolt you back to the reality of violent crime. Crucially, the music is as psychotic as the acts it documents, with tracks sometimes consisting of just two sounds, one a piercingly high, unearthly hiss, the other a vacant roar of static, with effects mirroring Bennett's hysterical vocals. By refusing to explain the title dedication, the level of disturbance is doubled, requiring you to face up to your motives for buying the record. By refusing any mediating context, Whitehouse held up a mirror in which you can make out the dim outline of yourself. Whitehouse force you to conclude that Peter Kurten wasn't a monster but a human being.

THE NEW BLOCKADERS CHANGEZ LES BLOCQUEURS VINYL ON DEMAND LP 1982

FERIAL CONFINÉ THE FULL USE OF NOTHING FUSETRON LP 1989

Released in a tiny run on their own label in 1982, *The New Blockaders'* debut, *Changez Les Blocqueurs*, turned the international noise scene on its head. In a shed in their parents' back garden, Richard and Philip Ruperus conceived a bastard form that married the industrial fury of early Throbbing Gristle with acoustic improvisation. Their surreal liminal juxtapositions revealed a feel for the physical properties of sound, even as their approach was pure punk. With the crack of wheelchair runners and the sounds of broken glass vying with microphone feedback and bowed metal, the album was a suburban reimagining of Neubeuten's savage rituals.

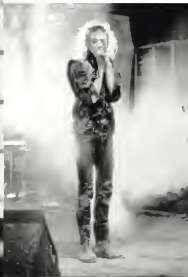
Key New Blockaders collaborator Andrew Chalk, now a member of Mtor with Christoph Heermann, also ran a solo project, *Penal Confine*, through much of the 80s and 90s, although the available recorded evidence is thin on the ground. Originally a cassette-only release, *The Full Use Of Nothing* (1989) was later issued on vinyl by Fuseotron. All of its sounds are generated by exciting huge plates of hung metal strung with contact mics. The cryptic title suggests the alchemical processes by which Chalk draws an impossible range of sounds from a single degraded source.

LAIBACH M8 DECEMBER 21, 1984 MUTE CD 1986

Well before they set their sights on lampooning the fascist tendencies inherent in the most innocuous mainstream rock, Laibach were a fearsome noise group. Their bombastic and all-consuming sound was dedicated to jamming signals long enough to facilitate the return of the repressed, thereby allowing submerged histories and archetypes to rise to the surface and thus be fully exorcised. In this controversial spirit, they called themselves *Laibach*, after the German name for Ljubljana, capital of Yugoslavia's westernmost republic of Slovenia. The name was resonated through the region's complex history, most recently during the Nazi occupation. On forming shortly after Tito's death in 1980, Laibach were almost immediately banned, forcing them to advertise early concerts using nothing but their insignia, a Malawch-style black cross. M8 December 21, 1984, documents their early performances.



Clockwise from left:
Beyoncé's "Destiny Fulfilled" video;
East River's "New York City" video;
Whitehouse's "Whitehouse" video



Laibach's project was a dangerous one mounted at great personal risk, seeing how their first decade was played out in the unwelcoming communist state of Yugoslavia. Laibach juggled opposing totalitarian symbols in an attempt to separate reality from the imprint of history. Setting out to expose the dangers inherent in any totalitarian system, Laibach demonstrated the sheer volume required to begin bringing down the wall of state-generated noise.

Correspondingly their performances focused on noise's most martial elements. MB is dominated by thunderous percussion, blasts of electricity and great hangers full of ablaze drum. The group's noise is necessarily beyond control, much of it generated by the heated debate surrounding Laibach's right – or otherwise – to espouse such ambiguous politics. In time, it became clear that in projecting a state organism modelled after hated regimes onto the rapidly disintegrating Yugoslav communist federation of republics, Laibach were essentially offering themselves as the sacrificial scapegoat of its pending collapse into democracy.

It was a dangerous game, to be sure, posing very real threats to the group, who had to be absolutely certain of what they were doing and why. Just such consciousness is what makes MB, among other early Laibach collections like *Rekapitulacije 1980-1984*, an exemplary document.

IDEA FIRE COMPANY ANTI-NATURAL SMELL RADIO LP 1986 SCOTT FOUST THE FIGHTING SENSUALIST PINKPILLER TAPES MC 1981-2002

For the past few decades, US noise has been dominated by a handful of combative forces with a penchant for self-mythologizing and a wardrobe full of sonic personas. Even in a scene that includes Ron Lessard/Emil Beaulieu of RRRRecords, Seymour Glass of Glinda Of External Secretion and Bananaphys magazine, and Tom Smith aka Om Myth of To Live And Shave In LA and OHNE, Scott Foust of Idea Fire Company stands out as its most consistently fascinating player.

Recalling Wyndham Lewis's injunction that "You must talk with two tongues if you do not wish to cause confusion", "Anti-Natural", the text accompanying Idea Fire Company's classic 1986 album, reads like a furious Verbalist attack on notions of authenticity. On *Anti-Natural* Foust and Karla Borecky work synthesizers, keyboards, guitar and tapes into blank noise glossolalias that mirror the eerie, isolated landscapes of early Austerlitz, Klaus Schulze and Whitehouse. Foust constantly provokes contradictory emotions, making you feel one way by using a sound of mood associated with its opposite. In the process he highlights how so much art is cleared on manipulating desires. In his attempt to clear enough space to allow listeners to reclaim their own emotions, his Idea Fire Company's programme is as profoundly liberating as Throbbing Gristle's.

MERZBOW MATERIAL ACTION 2 LOWEST MUSIC AND ARTS CHARGE LP 1983 NOISEMBRYO THE RELEASING ECHOING CD 1984

From Tokyo, Masami Akita's Merzbow casts a huge, ululating shadow over the whole of noise music. He's

the most prolific, instantly recognisable artist in noise. Repeatedly edifying itself at the edge of meaning, his noise is irreducible to anything but itself. "I wanted to make music that consisted solely of the guitar-smashing parts of The Who and King Crimson," Akita explained in *The Wire* 1999, and the huge mass of Merzbow's monstrous back catalogue can be seen as a celebration of rock at its most loud and destructive.

Although active since 1980, 1983's *Material Action 2* was Akita's first vinyl LP, following a mountain of cassettes released on his own Lowest Music & Art and ZSF Product labels. Featuring Akita in due performance with longterm shadow Kayoshi Mizutani, *Material Action 2* is free improvisation liberated from the demands of communication, a series of instant decompositions where the players strain conventional musical relationships to the point that they break down entirely, thus allowing unmediated access to a realm of pure, nugatory sound.

1994's *Noisebroy* is classic Merzbow, a devouring flux of obsessive automatism and delinquent electronic improvisation. His well-documented fascination with bondage and the associated politics of dominance and submission govern his dynamic sense, holding long, suspended tones for seconds on end before disintegrating with an abrupt crash. Merzbow's sound is pornographic in the most hardcore sense in that it's noise that isn't dressed up as music. There's no plot and no build-up, instead it cuts straight to the pay-off, a gonzo compilation of vivid, libidinous music shots. Like the greatest high energy rock, it's gratuitously satisfying.

HUOKAIKAN ROMANCE ALCHEMY CD 1991 INCAPACITANTS FEEDBACK OF NMS ALCHEMY CD 1992 CCCC COSMIC COINCIDENCE CONTROL CENTRE INDOCHINESE FACTORY CD 1992

**MASONNA
SHOCK ROCK**
ALCHEMY CD 2002

Throughout the 90s, Japan has been the centre of gravity for all-devouring electronic noise. Japanese artists – in particular the Osaka school formed round the Alchemy label, and home of Boredoms – have digested and regurgitated contemporary noise modes, reimagining them with gory Technicolor stylings and ever more extreme levels of sonic overload. It's difficult to pinpoint exactly what it is about Japan that has helped cultivate such an exaggerated and endlessly varied noise scene without falling back on suspect ideas of national characteristics but the dialectic of chaos and control seems to be coded deep within the Japanese psyche. Rock music was never a domestic Japanese tradition. Noise was, and continues to be.

Outside Merzbow, Huokaidan are the most consistently devastating Japanese noise group with the deepest historical roots. They go back to the early 80s, when they started out as a free improv trio featuring Joji Hiroshige, Naoki Zushi and

legendary guitarist Idiot O'Clock. 1990's *Romance* consists of a massive 77 minute track that builds a hurricane of sound from waves of corrosive feedback and shrill, hyperventilating vocals from Junjo, who sings in the vibratory styles of Petty Wretches, Yoko Ono and Lisa Luback. Halfway through Hiroshige joins her on vocals, contrasting her ear-splitting tone with a bantane Sesame Street/Darth Vader delivery that's noxious enough to kill flies. "Non Stop Noise", trumpets the cover, which also features some picture postcard views of sunset over ruins and beach scenes – cheap misery in other people's holidays.

Hiroshige also runs Osaka's Alchemy label – alongside Tokyo's PSF, the premier Japanese underground imprint. Alchemy released *Incapacitants*' 1992 album, *Feedback Of NMS*, a stuporific fantastic side from the duo of Toshiki Miwaka and Fumio Kosaka that restores noise making to the status of the primal creative act, a manifestation of pure libidinous will.

CCCC are the Hawkwind of Japanese noise, a black nightmare committed to simulating extraterrestrial communion via organic energy and electricity alone. They have a highly stylised sci-fi approach, generating combinations of shortwave chatter, modulated alien broadcasts, high Wasp sounds à la Whitehouse and tumbling analogue codes.

Masonna, aka Masao Yamazaki, is best known for the punishing physicality of his rare, necessarily live live performances. Besides his noise work, his fetish for vintage analogue electronics and exploitation soundtracks has birthed two side projects: Space Machine, where he expands on the cosmic sounds of early Krautrock pioneers, and Christine 23 Onna, a psych-rock group that also features Fusao Toda on guitar. But at heart Masonna is all about cathartic noise, or Ejaculation Generation, as one early release described it. 2002's *Shock Rock* is part of a major label trilogy intended to mark 15 years at the bottom for Yamazaki. It's a choice selection, 31 concentrated blasts of pure white light, a set of exactly explicated cathartic noise miniatures. It's what you always imagined punk would be like when all you'd seen were the pictures of snik and spikes.

RYOJI IKEDA +/- TOUCH CD 1996

Unlike most Japanese noise superheros, Ryoji Ikeda doesn't come out of the cassettes 'n' comics under-the-counter culture. Rather, his roots are in sound art and dance clubs. His best work combines sound art's obsession with the physical properties of vibration and its spatial aspects and DJ culture's use of annihilating repetition. The title +/- immediately sets you up for the binary nature of the scenes within. This is noise as deafening silence carved from flashing, eviscerated electronic tones. +/- forgoes the one-way assault of most Japanese noise and instead creates a more inclusive, exploratory headspace. It's still invasive enough to map the limits of whatever room it's played in but, like La Monte Young's *Dreamhouse*, you can effect changes in it as you wake through it. Its peaks and troughs generate backdrop rhythms that sound like the dance of tiny bird bones deep inside your ears. The parts involving long, held tones work a particular rictifying magic, leaving ghosts burnt in the air in a

way that recalls the blasted auras of Yves Klein's Vampire paintings. Ikeda's researching of noise's physiological effects harks back to Throbbing Gristle's early experiments with crowd control, highlighting the race between art and the military-industrial complex for the control of people's minds. His work similarly blurs the lines between magic and science, noise and music.

PITA
GET OUT
MEGO CD 1999

KEVIN DRUMM
SHEER HELLISH MIASMA
MEGO CD 2002

If Einstürzende Neubauten and the Japanese actionists eroticise noise in a collision of flesh and metal, the artists associated with Vienna's Mego label alienate it from the physical once more, creating disembodied soundtracks that use noises estranged from any identifiable source. Often amplifying the cold, low level hum that underpins modern life, whether sounding tides of abstract, theoretical code or building rhythmic chimeras from distressed digital signals, their conceptions are genuinely post-industrial.

On Pita aka Mego founder Peter Rehberg's *Get Out* (1999), the tools of earlier electronic pioneers are in place, albeit digitally updated, from the use of glitches generated by corrupted media through rhythms built from quats and clicks, barrages of pure zigzag electronics and extreme speaker phasing. The recording pivots around the staggering untitled third track, a bombastic assault that deflates the euphoric energy of dancefloor Trance with thundering, sad choruses, Hendrix-style backwards phasing and Merzbow levels of mangling electricity.

Kevin Drumm's machine music is scored for a fleet of divergent voices, from static fists of bottom end and through infernally treated guitars and the sound of microphones eating the air. *Sheer Hellish Miasma* (2002) is pure grindcore. Its intense barrage of electronic shot packs all of the dynamo, Lucifer yucks of the best Metal while simultaneously providing the intense cerebral massage of the most complex noise. If Merzbow is the guitar-smashing part of The Who and King Crimson, then Drumm is the smoke-filled aftermath, the long feedback coda from the lost hanging power chord.

WOLF EYES/SMEGMA
NO FACE LIVES
DE SILVA LP 2003

Michigan trio Wolf Eyes' *Fuck Pete Larsen* (2003) saw liberated rock music once more cannibalising pure noise. Their meeting with LAFMS's Smeigma – now bolstered by vocalist, author and long-term noise champion Richard Meltzer – effectively brings us full circle. Here Meltzer chews on pithy one-liners and the profundities of geezerhood while Smeigma undermines Wolf Eyes' muscular electronic attack with the non-stop jabber of clattering plastic toys and horns. It's possibly the first appearance of a xylophone solo on a noise record. *No Face Lives* successfully marries the freeform freerout of early Red Krayola with the occult operations of Throbbing Gristle and early LAFMS's punk undermining of art. "Don't forget the spandex," Meltzer cautions. Metal machine music indeed. ☐

Clockwise
from left:
Lalbach
Kevin Drumm
Miasma



Charts

Playlists from the outer limits

Death Jam 15

Harve With Weard
 Turned Music For Punks (United States)
Flume Redigan
 Deep Co La (United States)
Johnny Cash
 "The Merry Gent" from Solitary Man (American Recordings)
Daveed Gales
 "Wild Man's City" from Best Of The PB (Jade)
Vietnam
 Drawing With The Devil (Eigen Arts)
Singer
 "Substance" from Regn In Blood (Bloodline)
De Yodhse Davis
 "Death Is A Sound" (De Yodhse Davis NPS)
Rev. JJ Gates
 "Oh Death Where Is Thy Sting" from The Anthology Of American Folk Music (Centristone Folkways)
Vervan
 Dead And Gone (Tribal)
Alto Haché
 "The Drenched Ferry Across The Sky" from Verbal Barrowed And Other Works (Fylgja)
Guthrie Piding
 "Death Is Not The End" from Each Man Kills The Thing He Loves (Polygram)
Barstowzende Heubertson
 "Death Is A Devil" from Halber Mensch (Polaroid)
PL
 Death Does It? (Eigen)
Clare Rahn & Lydia Lerch
 "Don't Fear The Reaper" (Big Out)
Towers Van Zandt
 "Waiting Around To Die" from Towers Van Zandt (Banister)

Compiled by The Glass Regger

We welcome charts from record shops, radio shows, clubs, DJs, labels, musicians, readers, etc. Email: charts@theweek.co.uk

Point to the world: Wino's effects (see page 36)

Musique Machine 15

Secret Chiefs 3
 Book Of Horrors (Johnny)
Delebragere
 444 International (Moonlight)
Bark
 Feedbacker (Dreghda)
Shaw
 Dead Neger OST (Jester)
Daniel Adewale
 The Early Recordings Vol 1 Songs Of Pain And More Songs Of Pain (Dorian)
Malcolm Ray Jim Kelly
 Jump Out The Window Music Vols 1 & 2 (self released)
 CD 10
Samuel
 When? (Southern Lead)
Wino
 Beautiful (Apostrophe)
Woods
 The Imaginary Cavalcade Of Time (The End PHD)
Kazuki Tetsudawa
 Music No. 6 (PSF)
Moover
 Bathing (Prophecy)
Drumhead
 Drumhead (Rune Grammofon)
Wendell
 A Pleasant Factor (A Necessary Angel)
Heco & Himeko Sakakima
 Ash Is The Rainbow (Denzoku/TaR)
Motion
 Every Action (H&C)

Compiled by www.musique-machine.com

List 15

Brandmayr/Delebragere/Monoth/Slewert
 The Intellectual Der Synthesis (Duo/Gedo)
Tragel
 Highway My Friend (Old Hat)
Silberbachel
 Circa (Self)
Quater Master
 Eight Landscapes (For 4 Ears)
Frank Merz Jan Arlows
 1-1-1 (Blood)
Pussner
 Live In Japan (Hood/Towal)
Osamu Yuchioka & Nobuko Takemura
 Tumbables And Computers (Hood)
Almo Redigade
 Advice Hill (Table Of The Elements)
Taylor Desprez & Christopher Willets
 Inside Architecture (Antiphony)
Werner Delebragere/Peter Heurtinger
Schwab M/John Tilbury
 Almond (Crack)
Morton Feldman
 Late Works With Clarinet, Percussion, Clarinet, Et Cetera
 Quaker Dancers (Mute)
Toshimaru Nakamura
 No Input (Mute)
Richard Chartier
 Two Locations (Self)
Chicago Underground Trio
 Ash Is The Rainbow (Denzoku/TaR)
Stephen Morris/Rudolf Moss/Jack Schaller/Emmett
 Quality Hotel (Jade)

Compiled by Hervé Rognon, Les Records
www.list-15.com

The Office Ambience

Fopp & Eno
 The Essential Shaz (Opal)
Mats Gustafsson/Bone Youth With Friends
 Home 3 (Emulsion/Supermind)
Up-ig/M
 Fan Psychology (Powers) (Stable)
Doctor Mix And The Roma
 Wall Of Noise (Aust)
Oren Ambarchi
 Cranes From The Estate (Duo)
Ungla
 Love & Unity (20th Century Dubwise (Blood And Fire)
Seth P Brundel
 David's Pains (Anthology)
The Velvet Underground
 Live At Max's Kansas City Deluxe Edition (Rhino/Warner)
Cell
 Stock Arrows (Threshold Record)
Text Of Light
 Text Of Light (Slaughter Furniture Co)
7 Year Rabbit Cycle
 Word Machines (Free Perception Society)
Kneadage
 Live Onstage (Kikaku) (PSF)
Noel Akchou/Roland Aumt/Luc Pomeroy
 Intra-Mino Acoustique (Blue Cheptok)
Radiux
 Juxtaposition (The Jockey)
TV Low
 Powerful Friends And Devoted Lovers (Beltup Bay)

Compiled by The Mini Sound System



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Soundcheck

This month's selected CDs and vinyl

A brace of lush new recorded collaborations featuring laptop improviser Ikue Mori provide a fillip to Julian Cowley's "listening ear"



Secret life of plants: Ikue Mori (left) and Zeena Parkins in the phantom orchard

ZEENA PARKINS & IKUE MORI PHANTOM ORCHARD

MEGEO CD

MEPHISTA ENTOMOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

TZADIK CD

"The word in the hand is the sound in the eye is the sight in the listening ear," wrote Californian poet Robert Duncan. Ikue Mori, relocated from Tokyo to New York since 1977, is a musician acutely sensitive to that rare faculty of sight in the listening ear. She has acknowledged that her primary inspiration is visual, the impact of cinema, a desire to make paintings that are heard. Her 1998 Tzadik release *B/Sides* was an overt acknowledgement: music for the films of radical director Abigail Child, soundtracks made with Mori's drum machine and sampler plus help from organist Anthony Coleman, Andy Haas on didgeridoo and Zeena Parkins playing electric harp and accordion. Mori's association with Parkins has been long and close but with the Mego CD *Phantom Orchard* their musical symbiosis has reached new levels of sympathetic integration.

In recent years Mori has made laptop computer the core component of her musical activity, a shift of allegiance celebrated with the 2001 solo computer set *Labyrinth*. The current designation of her instrumental set-up is "electronics", in effect moving emphasis away from specific hardware to a less source-oriented sense of her expressive medium. Bearing in mind her self-taught drumming with DNA, the No Wave trio she ran with guitarist Art Lindsay and bassist Tim Wright, Mori continues to move steadily towards ever greater fluidity in her sonic explorations, effecting predetermined limits and functional constraints as she opens up curiously dreamlike auditory spaces.

Zeena Parkins is a kindred spirit in that respect. A crucial aspect of John Cage's legacy to hands-on musical practitioners has been his encouragement to approach each instrument as a total configuration, to revise its function according to creative needs and to recognise it as a field of potentials. Parkins has spoken of the harp as a "sound machine of limitless capacity". Recognisable harp sonitudes have their place in her improvising but in addition to finding unorthodox ways to sound the electric harp, she prepares and modifies the acoustic instrument, unlocking it from the genteel role long assigned by conventional usage. For *Phantom Orchard* she is heard too on piano, Mellotron, Rhodes electric piano and three vintage synthesizers – Moog, Buchla and the seldom encountered Gleason Pentaphonic Clear. Itemised by name in the sleeve notes, none of these is fettered as museum piece or oddity; each meets an imaginative requirement.

Although there are new jointly written tracks with moods varying from tranquil nuptial trickle and drift to glimmers of scarring noise, the music has the flowing unity of hallucination or surreal vision, meshes of acoustic imagery at once vividly delineated and continuously melting, illuminating rays flashed amongst psychic shadows. As in dreams, highly wrought artifice and natural growth blend in the music's play of precise fine detail and textured feeling. *Phantom Orchard* is a remarkable entwining of tastes and tendencies and a prolonged rich vision for the listening ear.

Mephista is a trio dedicated – as improvisers and as composers – to the goal of collective expression. In this context Mori's electronics interact with Sylvie Courvoisier's expressively dramatic piano and Susan Berres's glowingly articulate and clear free drumming. The 15 tracks on *Entomological Reflections*, recorded in New York in November 2003,

form a sequel to the group's 2002 debut *Black Narcissus*, which featured as cover art a painting by Salvador Dalí. Mori has supplied a collaged image for the new release, a mock-serious wire-framed face with plumed headdress. The title of "La Femme 100 Têtes", the first track here, alludes to Surrealist artist Max Ernst's graphic text of that name. Still, overall this CD is less surrealistically homogeneous than *Phantom Orchard*. It has more widely dispersed centres of interest, more disruptive fractures and discontinuities built into the collective voice, a sustained working together of disparate elements rather than smooth fusing.

Clearly there are intrinsic differences in character between Mori's electronics and the acoustic instruments. All three musicians draw strength from that contrast. Courvoisier's style is vigorous, prone to eruption and wry allusion. Her phrasing, however fragmented for effect, defines robust figures. Ibarra too is emphatic, even when she is lacking together an unlikely patchwork of ostensibly remote percussive idioms. Mori shades and accents between the bolder contours injecting extra texture and enlivening tingles. Her contributions often make audible those moment-to-moment tensions that form in the air around and between piano and percussion, acting less as glue than as disclosing dye. In differing ways on *Phantom Orchard* and *Entomological Reflections*, Mori's subtlety and adaptability continue to set a standard for live digital music making which few of her contemporaries can consistently match. Her ability to render in sound the insubstantialities of mood and changes of atmosphere is unusually refined. Parkins, Ibarra and Courvoisier play in ways that display their deep appreciation of that ability, that sensitivity to "the sight in the listening ear". □

OREN AMBARCHI GRAPES FROM THE ESTATE

BY WALL MONTGOMERY

Oren Ambarchi's latest, his third for Touch, begins with a snarling track exploring the soft, warm tones with which his guitar playing is most associated. The notes loop gracefully, swirling as they go. There's a well-worn decay and an appealing capacity for low-register wobbling. Ambarchi can twist the guitar as essentially a tone generator. Pluck and bend are suppressed and the ear is asked to home in on the repeating notes themselves. But his focus on sound in itself is only half the story. It is brought together with the arch pop language that are given full head in Ambarchi's group Sun. The second track, "The Girl With The Silver Eyes," begins with soaring tones but the atmosphere changes completely with the entry of a brush-accented snare drum. The loops are slowly overlaid with percussive, Hammond organ and strange, sparking guitar chords (all played by Ambarchi himself). The result is a wistful lyricism with allegiances floating somewhere between tone and tone. The next piece, "Remedios The Beauty," at one pleasantly queasy point "tells us on itself, dropping away to play deep, low tones against resonant bells. But Ambarchi oversteers the mix with strings and a descending piano phrase that soon hangs heavily.

More sustained is the final track, "The 20 minute long 'Stars Against, Webos Sun.' The wailing of the long-line man guitar note gives the piece a materializing ambiguity. Slowly, more tuneful, maternal gathers around it and the piece moves into an easy-on-the-ear post-rock pastoral. Yet it's hardly comforting. There are plenty of strengths to this album: an open, improvisatory feel; a sound that's both dense and unfussy about hits and loop-point clicks; a skillful layering of elements. But Ambarchi's personal third stream isn't as persuasive as some of his past work—at least, not yet.

MARK APPLEBAUM CATFISH

TOUCH CD

BY DAN WARMUTH

Chicago born Applebaum studied at UC San Diego with composer Brian Ferneyhough, to whom he dedicated "Ferneyhough Remix," a two and a half minute tour de force for two percussionists and tape using samples culled from Ferneyhough's *Bore Asaphete*. It's a lively start to a colorful survey of Applebaum's diverse activities as composer and improviser. Even the earliest work here, the ensemble piece *Aurus* begun in 1992 at the age of 25, displays a wide range of influences, from *Eggs* to Varese to the French serialists.

It's hardly surprising that Applebaum has based his cycle on the myth of the two-headed Roman god who looked in two opposite directions, as a feeling of bipolarity pervades *Catfish*, from the ferociously complex flute writing of *Entre Finales* IV via the intriguing self-performing motive schemes of *Deceptive V*—from *Satan* to *Alabaster*. *Travels in Outer Space* is full-bodied white-noise. *Mortal*, *Entrance of Alabaster*—performed by three pianists in the upper octaves of the same piano. A "cosy" piece indeed. The steady calm that concludes *Aurus* is followed by the virtuoso

flourish pitch brawls of *Orionides* *Exile*.

In keeping with the tradition of his adopted state of California, Applebaum also builds his own instruments, and the colorful assemblage of contact miked jazz calls his mousebaker as featured on *Licensed To Fail*, a brief improvisation with Paul Drescher on his own self-designed quadrophone. It's a risk rich of strange guitars and textures, but Applebaum's improvising skill is better represented as his recent home-sung instrumental *Prophets*. By way of homage and thanks to another notable Jersey, *Radix*, executive producer John Zorn, the album goes out with a bang with a remnant of Naked City's "Snagglepuss." *Remix*, rather, as it curiously gives the impression of being twice as long as the original while having exactly the same duration—a cunning sleight of hand from a composer to watch.

BARK PSYCHOSIS CODENAME: DUSTSUCKER

FIRE CD

BY ROB YOUNG

I once played drums in a group that supported Bark Psychosis, at the time when they fully lived up to the primal screaming tendency imprinted in their name. I barely recall a particularly hallucinatory evening, around midsummer 1990, in the cellar of a Cambridge college, one of those cheap electric nights which might erupt into either spontaneous displays of free love, or an abandonment to violence. Both of the above later occurred. I believe, but not before BP's Graham Sutton, ramping up his delivery to frenzied pitch and screaming himself stupid into the mix under a frisson of swarming noise, had incensed the wrath of a professional type from upstairs, who silently and remorselessly unplugged the group's power adapters.

Between then and now I have witnessed Sutton and his group appearing at Ronnie Scott's, then unsuccessfully attempting to persuade them to play live drum 'n' bass at the ICA, debuting his single *Boysenberry* with bumpered DJ Cuddahurst at a star party, playing at countless mid-90s club nights at East London's Blue Note, backslapped by the likes of Goldie, Randall and Doc Scott. Finally after a lay-off, he turned up behind the counter of my local video rental shop. But now, a decade on from BP's post-life retirement, Sutton has reconvened an entirely new ensemble to reconnect with his Psychotic muse.

Codename: Dustsucker, named after his recording space in East London, could have been made the month after he—it seems unaffected by Sutton's break-neck escapades. There's not to say it's regressive. Sutton's drummer is Lee Harris, formerly of Talk Talk, and *Orange* (which Sutton guested on their *Hard DF* [instead LP] and now Ben Gibbons's taproot of choice, from a floating group of ten musicians, *liberal use* is made of vibraphone, wood flute, vibraphone, trumpet, mellotron and various vintage keyboard sounds. Few, if any groups have adopted the phrase, finding, lineup sound favoured by Bark Psychosis. If anything, *Release* came across a similar soundcheck but employed a meta-musical, rather than, as in, the service of songwriting. It takes a piece of time and very British Ignite of delicate male songwriting—a form of voluntary art practiced by Nick Drake, Bill Fay, John Martyn, David Sylvian, Talk

Talk, Ark Kane and others. It would be easy to dismiss this lot as fly aesthetes, but their success lies in steering clear of sentimentality or self-pity, all thrice on an ecstatic and innovative sense of musical arrangement. The emotional velocity of the lyrics—shared between Sutton, Arpa Bichela, Rachel Dwyer and Silke Rutz—gives its momentum from the friction between individual and crowd, city and suburb. Dustsucker's production is nothing short of gigantic. The colossal opening bells of "I'm What Is Said To Have Its Read" (under as though Vulcan was bashing on a washing machine with his head inside it, *On "Burning The City"*, sulky guitars skid-scribble like notes above the trestle, "400 Winton" a malarkey like a careworn man's ray Sutton may have his group under a tight rein, but it makes for a uniquely, lasciviously unbalanced experience.

BIOSPHERE AUTOUR DE LA LUNE

TOUCH CD

BY MARTIN LONSLAY

Biosphere, aka Norwegian Geir Jørgensen, was commissioned by Radio France Culture to create a piece for the Festival des Radio France at Montpellier. On acceptance, he was given duplicate keys to the station's archive. Refusing to be drawn in by its riches, Jørgensen instead formed in on an early 1960s disambiguation of Jules Verne's *De la Terre à La Lune*, a presentist tale of mankind moon flight, aging from Florida to a spaceship in the Pacific. As a starting point for his two-part "symphony," Jørgensen splashed samples of his dialogue next to sounds from the MRR space station.

Autour de la Lune is a continuation, building on and refining the original commission. The quantity microbial, blue hued images of fellow Norwegian Tor-Magnus Lundseth's cover painting hint at the music within. Jørgensen clearly has a morose glow for the 1950s and 60s electroacoustic palette, which could sound primitive and cosmic at once.

The album's opening, "Introduction," is subsequently reduced by its increasingly displaced successors. A repeated feature makes its subtle point, shaped out of Gothic organ matter that undulates monotonously against a gurgling background hum. Its steady pulse acts as a lengthy scene setter, with "Introduction" beginning the tendency for ghostliness that dominates the middle section. Base physically mixes with silver treble, crushing, turning into scintillating red interference during "Modifi." Jørgensen is working with the very essence of minimalism, his "Introduction" hanging back like burnished light before the storm. The thunder never breaks. "Crispale" features a different hum, a click beginning its task, leading to an almost imperceptible intensification. Another click and draws back Jørgensen has created a field where any microscopic change has an exaggerated impact on the scene. "Disparis" returns to the character of "Introduction," but with faster elements. By its end, it's almost not there. "Inverne" begins back the low shudder, then the strong "Remise" replaces the earlier tonal sonorousness. It takes a piece of time and very British Ignite of delicate male songwriting—a form of voluntary art practiced by Nick Drake, Bill Fay, John Martyn, David Sylvian, Talk

meanwhile, but when heard clear, it's a mesmerizing experience. On *Autour de La Lune*, Biosphere successfully forges an unusual interest in vestigial occurrences.

IAN BREKAWELL VOGALS

LONDON COLLEGE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF ART AND DESIGN ARCHIVE

BY RICH MASTON

Ian Brekwell is an artist and writer whose work is often a hybrid—he "writes pictures," he has said. He's at home in video, radio, the spoken and written word. This well-ranging collection of his audio work comprises a 1990 diary made for Radio 3, 15 newly recorded short stories, a live commentary from a journey through Durham, made in 1995, and Brekwell's one-off of *Clear Spot* for the 1998 Resistance FM HS. (Restricted Service License) radio art broadcasts from London's Royal Festival Hall.

The most celebrated of Brekwell's diary recordings, that of an IRA bomb exploding outside in the London about as the artist talks to a friend on the telephone, is also the most unusual. It is rare that the outside world appears so physically and dramatically in his measured, intimate reflections on the apparently necessary absurdities of social life. The bomb is an anomaly, swiftly thrown into relief by subsequent entries, which record the trembling aftershock upon lips of shell-shocked commentators some hours later in the city.

Brekwell's signature method is to observe sound, the extremely ordinary and render the subject uncanny. His exposure of the hidden dimension of transitory events and his questioning of the certainties of everyday behaviour speaks of the finely tuned observational skills of a consummate visual artist. This is a portrait of a particular kind, sometimes antiseptic or sardonic, more often tender and witty.

The short stories (some as short as 24 seconds) are in character monologues which vividly bring to mind the vicious, pregnant and witty characters of the radio plays of Ian Brekwell the novelist. They use a few adverbial sound effects to reinforce a suggestion of locale or mood but are mainly concerned with the inner life, with unconsciousness as the engine of motive and movement. "Hidden Cities. Durham" is more ambitious, a real-time narrative made of a travelogue conducted outdoors in a boat and a "lay sermon," which draws on Kafka's *The Trial*, delivered inside Durham Cathedral. Typically it is under the unfriest sky that intimacy is experienced, and in the vast but palpably finite building that the world is comprehended. The *Clear Spot* radio record, the meditation of the then latest interview, which puts him in touch with listeners not on his desktop but in distant New York. He peaks up when he realises that someone is actually listening—and it is here that the social necessity of Brekwell's work becomes apparent. His is not the reaching out performance of someone on stage but a drawing in of the equal. Amplification is not for him a means to make small things big.

Brekwell's sense of humour is always an acknowledgment of his sense of proportion. The human condition is the realisation of the presence in a world of feeling impressions and longing, half-crazy multitudes, stands proud, bemused and smiling.



Elements of style: Packaging for Guitar Series

VARIOUS **GUITAR SERIES VOLUMES I & II** TABLE OF THE ELEMENTS NO NUMBER 2820

These releases recall the beginnings of Table Of The Elements, the independent label that set up in Atlanta, Georgia in 1993. As its opening broadside against a sleepy and indifferent rock nation, the label put out a series of 7" vinyl releases featuring individual masters of avant garde guitar, plus rock sympathizers like Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore and Lee Ranaldo at once towing fascinated in their wake and conferring their prestigious blessing on the project. These two compilations bring together releases from 1993 and 1994 respectively, from a host of names whose prolific output makes them extremely familiar to Wire readers - Keiji Haino, Derek Bailey, Paul Panhayan among them. However, housed in smart wooden boxes featuring mock-Periodic Table graphics and accompanied by gusto-drenched sleeve notes, the two collections reawaken a sense of the sheer revolutionary charge of these players' operations, blasting away, albeit tempestuously, the blasé fog of academic over-familiarity. "Here, guitars were not merely played. They were also abused, cheated, lied to, exalted, obliterated, teased, tricked up... targeted for death, elected President... used in ways and for purposes few could possibly have imagined." Certainly, if no one had ever heard Keith Rowe, here would be the place to direct them for their first radiation treatment. The notes explain also the underlying concept of Table Of The Elements: that there are parallel cultural histories to the one given and imposed, and this is one of them.

As great a job as the notes do of barking and persuading, the submissions here, though especially fascinating to those opening their ears to them for the first time, inevitably vary in quality. Scifi, "Keith Rowe's "We Want Some Minutes, OK?" opens the 1993 collection with typical concussiveness,

slamming his guitar repeatedly as if into an invisible wall, the sounds bucking and bruised; these are sounds against which you almost feel you have to defend yourself physically. With "Variations On Jay", Hans Reichel, part of a first wave of Improv guitarists, unravels voluptuous, twanging figures that threaten to coalesce into regular beauty but remain always just off-kilter. A very young Jim O'Rourke is featured here; his first entry, "Muni", is somewhat tentative, a little too respectful of Improv niceties and, where they exist, conventions. Only with "Michel Piccoli" does he pluck up confidence. Japan's KK Null lives up, a smidgen too figuratively, to the sleeve notes' awe-inspiring proposition that "electric guitar is the enemy of the state". His heavy machinery fretboard work on "Cryonics" whines and saws away as if at the very grids of state apparatus. Henry Kaiser oscillates between a heavily treated exotica, put through some gamelan mangle of his own invention on "Delirium", then on "Homesickness" explodes with a veritable anagram, or deconstruction of heavy rock idioms.

On the second collection, Derek Bailey provides the highlights of both these collections. His "New Year Messages 1-4" are light-fingered and playful in a deeper, little explored sense of that word. Notes fall like sweet flakes from his fingertips, blown about in cazzing zings. Vivacious and un-spartan, this is the pleasure of the string in full effect and a riposte to those who regard him as some weird, desiccated purveyor of deliberate anti-music. The layer of verbal Improv he adds on the fourth track is a crowning delight, a fractured but well-wishing communiqué that functions as a commentary on his own methods and intentions. He, more than anyone else, uses to the opportunity and occasion offered by Table Of The Elements here.

The eight brief guitar works by Keiji Haino, by contrast, are incidental. He bucks the stereotype that Japanese artists are most naturally suited to the haiku

David Stubbs assays a decade-old avant guitar survey from Table Of The Elements and finds the chemistry is still working

mode. These terse electric blasts, linkings of forest windchimes and astringent strummings do not benefit from brevity. Rather, they feel like morsels from the great man's table. He's better in full banquet, maximalist mode. Loren Mazzacane (later Connors's four short pieces are played with a sort of wincing delicacy, as if plucking flowers in extreme sympathy for the pain incurred by breaking their stems. Paul Panhayan's "The Galvanos Part 1" rumbles cloudily, brooding on the same, clanging chord, while "Part 2" is rendered as if trance-like, each irregular sound played at the behest of some inner prompting.

The ventures of Sonic Youth's guitarists into Improv have divided opinion. Some are gratified at their support for the free playing community, others suspect them of seeking avant garde, academic prestige by association. The sheer duration of their ongoing investigations into these areas surely dispel accusations of bad faith or dilettantism. That said, their emphasis on effects rather than physical engagement with the strings does betray their rock background here. This works well on Lee Ranaldo's "Smoke Ring (Lesson 5)", its multiple, irregular pulses bombarding you like rays from all angles, less so on the crude, howlings of Thurston Moore's "Scarfield Wild", though he does redeem himself greatly with the Faustian, echo-drenched thunder of "Earth/Amp".

Since 1993, there has been a good deal of merging between leftfield rock and the avant garde, a conjoining stream of activity surging concurrently with the increasingly straight river of popular rock, but no longer running into it - there has been zero evolution in popular rock guitar in the last ten years, merely a perpetually warmed over, varnished rehash of tried and true guitar-rock. The Table Of The Elements collections do provide an index of guitar possibilities, parallel lines and lines for the instrument. □

DAVE BURRELL FULL-BLOWN TRIO

HIGH TWO CD

BY BEN WATSON

Born in 1940 in Middletown, Ohio, Dave Burrell studied at Berklee School. He wouldn't tell this from his approach to the piano, which is weighty and percussive, unrestrained by the politeness and restraint of Modern interpretation. Like the best composers William Parker on bass and Andrew Cyrille on drums, musicians made famous by tenures with pianist Cecil Taylor, Burrell sounds nothing like Taylor, but his approach is parallel in that his proceeds from the actual sound of piano keys being hit rather than from abstract concepts of harmony and phrasing. There are moments where all three musicians sound like drummers, recalling the crucial moment in 1962 when Duke Ellington jammed with Charles Mingus and Max Roach and ended up derision of jazz tradition to startle.

Like Dave's, Burrell's take on jazz tradition is intelligent and wild, embracing the complexities thrust on it by outsiders. This lineup (Berg's "It's Wonderful") (although titled "They Say 'It's Wonderful'") is played straight, as a Monkish stride number. Yet it isn't all out of place with Burrell's own advanced compositions. The marriages to make each run and chord reverberate with the history of jazz.

On "In The Balance" Parker plays like the West African bari, its percussive mode underlining the refusal of the tempered system running through Burrell's music. The lack of harmonic argument threatens a suspension of time that would be false on a CD, but it draws back into recognition of lyrics by the expressive push and pull between the three musicians. John Rosenberg's recording, live to two-track at Systems Two in Brooklyn, has a sympathy and depth lacking in far too many American jazz recordings at the moment. Playing time is short at 40 minutes, each track devoted to exploring a different idea. Burrell is in charge and the democracy and conviction of his choices are admirable. Burrell recorded his debut, *Choo, for NYC* in Paris in 1965, and has since been most visible playing piano in saxophone David Murray's best ensembles. This is the record to bring Burrell to the attention of all listeners who crave the unmistakable thump of aestheticity.

DANNY COHEN DANNYLAND

AND BY

BY MICHAEL DUBOIS

With musicians publicly police another artist, it's often the case that the enclosed bars at least a passing musical resemblance to the endgame. So the enthusiastic description of Danny Cohen's music by Tom Waits and Kathleen Brennan as "poignant and dark aged music through a tin horn of twisted relations and dark voices" promises something fashioned in Waits's image. Well, it is, for there are definite similarities here, there are just as many differences. They both produce a sonic diaphanous, but while Waits's music is a fleshy howl, Cohen's juxtaposes different elements. The opener "The Devil And Danny Cohen" is full of strange angles down between singer and ensemble — which incorporates Mellotron, lap steel, accordion and Fretch horn as well as bass

and two drummers. Here it sounds like Cohen has stumbled into a karaoke session, found the wrong words up on the screen, but soldiered on regardless. His voice is a weathered baritone, with a guttural graininess when he croaks down low. It's also limited and sometimes he's found poking around for the right notes, but never quite engaging with his own tunes.

Stuck by a pool of 12 musicians, including saxophonist and multi-instrumentalist Ralph Carneg, Cohen's *Dannyland* is peopled but with nothing. His lyrics are extraordinary. On "Motel Sea", the sleazy, sardonic start describes being brutally beaten by his father and his friends in an offshore, seaport manner. "Swelling" finds him natchecking Isaac Hayes and Barry White, before declaring, "I wish I was with Catherine Deneuve/Pam, France inside the Louvre/But here I am, I can't gonna move/Swelling and in the glow".

"Silent" builds up on the back of swelling accordion and guitar hooks, with Cohen called to the labor camps at the height of Soviet oppression. But the most poignant of these daggered songs is "Still Alive". An ad hoc yet ramshackle pastiche, it plots a serpentine path, while nodding wistfully "Stowaway Fields Forever" and "Tomorrow Never Knows", and finds Cohen sadly stating, "All of my heroes have died or lost their minds/I wish John Lennon was still alive".

DUSTBREEDERS & JUNKO MOMMY CLOSE THE DOOR

STRAIGHTUP FURNITURE CD

BY MARC MASTERS

Junko Hiroseki is a longtime member of Hijokken, Japanese extreme noise pioneers whose oeuvre stands firmly next to that of Merzbow, Keiji Haino and Osamu Yoshida in the annals of Far East noise. Dustbreeders are a French trio specializing in tape and turntable manipulation — their current instruments of choice are "manga-disques", that is, portable "T" record players attached to guitar amps. Dustbreeders met Junko in Japan in 2002. *Mommy Close The Door* collects three French performances from later that year, chucking up 53 minutes of unbending aural annihilation that can saguily be described as *loko* *no* *shibubong* against an army of flaming charaxes.

Opening with Junko's throaty growl shrieks, "Live At The Black Room, Metz, November 9 2002" slams the album into full alert. Tightly grating noise erases, with strands of vocal raking, distorted amp crawling and pure electronic scum emerging like fiery needles from a gasoline-drenched haystack. Bortolomaeus is the closest relevant here, but this group's wall of ear bullets is more random, with tactile noises and drags jutting in and out of the mix. "Live At La Maitre, Lille, November 8, 2002" sees Junko's pointed beat doing the trio's unidentifiable squalls. But things return quickly to unadorned sonic battering along the highest frequencies.

None of the preceding assault matches the closing "Live At La Joie Maudite, Rennes, November 16, 2002", a torrent of scapishattering dissonance that lurches any speakers attempting to represent it. Junko's grinding vocal throat is impressive, but the puzzle here is how The Dustbreeders can wrangle such infernal sound out of mundane records. Regardless, the

humans present are so inspired by the air-stretching proceedings that the cheers ending the album take on an appropriately distorted screech.

MONGEZE FEZA/ BERNTE ROSENGREN QUARTET

FREE JAM

BY BARRY WITHERDEN

Mongez Feza was a small figure who led a huge gap in the scene. At the age of what you saw was what you heard — small, wiry, agile, darting, jumpy, intense, cheeks pulling, eyes snapping open and occasionally threatening to pop out, one leg leaving the ground, the airborne pedal constantly anchoring itself round the earthbound companion limb, the upper torso suddenly jerking out of the perpendicular. You could easily imagine the sound from the vision — force, scolding spazings of notes, simple motifs whipped and barreled into cascading, complex structures, an almost violent lyricism and an incisive, knowing, gimlet-eyed tone throughout the sessions.

This album is drawn from three sessions in Stockholm by The Rosengren Quartet with Feza and percussionist Olav Teneiz guiding. Out during November and December 1972, several tracks have been extracted from longer performances. The result of hearing these outtakes seems a positive, leaving you wanting more. Even though the first three tracks on disc two are from the same session as those on disc one, someone has imposed the balance. Feza is heard to better advantage and the kit drums are better integrated.

Of all the bars aimed at the opponents of free jazz/*New Thing*/*Free Music*, the one least likely to draw blood was the contention that they couldn't play their instruments. It was musicality that was more often in question, and things could be better when the improvisers seemed less confident of their chops — if you don't have the option of concealing the waterfront episodes with fields of poetry and facile articulation, maybe you need more thought as to go into those naked moments. While there is much to enjoy on "Theme Of The Day", there were times during the 38 minute opener when I wished for less direct, and waves of guttural assault that for feeling pleasure when the group slipped into tempo to play a pop tune called "Sambaetton" six minutes from the end.

The longer, free tracks rarely achieve the sense of direction and purpose of antecedents like *Free Jazz*, *McAfee Can't Be Assured*, while the less direct featured, less frenetic cuts on disc two are far more satisfying. For one thing, you can better enjoy the contributions of the individual players. There are impressive solos from Rosengren, and you get to hear more of the songs of Feza's playing. Given how poorly represented he is at the moment, that is very welcome.

JEFF FUCILLO DISTURBED STRINGS

RICHELLE LP

BY EDWIN FOUNCIE

These records documents the strange and somewhat strained bed alliance between guitarist Jeff Fucillo and the late John Fahey, after coming together in the Spring of 1998 at the

small rock club in Portland, Oregon where Fucillo was the opening act for Fahey's trio. Backstage Fahey congratulated him on his performance and, much to Fucillo's delight and surprise, suggested they should record an album for its Reverent label.

The session took place that April with Fucillo playing various acoustic instruments in one room, while Fahey belted the central part, while playing a selection of short samples over the music. "I'm not sure if my intention was to show, direct, or disturb my playing," pondered Fucillo in his sleeveless. "Maybe a little of all three." Whatever Fahey's intention, this and result has more to do with his erratic creative personality than Fucillo's guitar improvisations, which his mentor later declared as being "too nice" and unfeasible in their present form. Six years later, however, in the wake of Fahey's death, the time has finally come to hear just what actually took place between the two guitarists.

One can sympathize with Fucillo for thinking that he was the victim of one of Fahey's carelessly mood swings, but in his playing here one can also hear why the creative partnership flourished so early. What Fahey was undoubtedly hoping to hear was an extended bout of rebellious guitar railing, rather than a muted echo of his formative years being played back to him. To be fair, Fucillo occasionally meanders adventurously into tangle-strutted Eugene Chadbourne territory as well as the more twisted American Primitive strain, but obviously not deeply enough to convince Fahey that he was looking down any better.

Fahey's sampled answers on Fucillo's playing are less intrusive than the sleeveless makes out, but when they do occur there is a genuine sense of communication (and grudging admiration) between producer and performer. Randomly skipping through a pile of assorted thriftstore records and crude electronic effects, Fahey's erratic contributions add a much needed sense of atmosphere and a twist of humor to the session.

NICK GREY & THE RANDOM ORCHESTRA REGAL DAYLIGHT

DESHIMITE CD

BY JULIAN COWLEY

Regal Daylight comes cloaked in legends of Romanians and American roots, with the Bucharest-born Nisica Moldoveanu apparently coming out of retirement to lend his operatic tones to the project. The oblique lyrics of Nick Grey's 11 songs pretend references to Dostoevsky, Newton, Dickinson, Moses and Somerset Maugham. "Obsidian Palace", we are told, was inspired by William S. Burroughs' postcard sketch *King Of Norway*. There's a "Song For Wyatt" with sketches that suggest Sir Thomas, the 16th century poet, rather than Robert. There's an injunction not to play the record on Sunday (its cover includes an electric guitar called Chuck Trill, Shaman Drum on a diatonic and a pianist Jasmine Pinkerton, while Fucillo contributes trumpet and "Latino sax appeal"). The whole affair has the savour of an eccentric and highly idiosyncratic

recording, with strings, sampler and electronics. He's also the main singer, emboldening the limitations of his voice with trappings of needy earnestness. But it's his name, calculatingly



As low as the law: Ostad Elahi

OSTAD ELAHI
THE CELESTIAL MUSIC OF OSTAD ELAHI
LE CHANT DU MONDE CD

THE PATHS OF DIVINE LOVE
LE CHANT DU MONDE CD

DIALOGUE WITH THE BELOVED
LE CHANT DU MONDE CD

CELESTIAL HARMONIES
LE CHANT DU MONDE CD

MYSTICAL ORISON
LE CHANT DU MONDE CD

CASCADE
LE CHANT DU MONDE CD

"During the 12 years of ascetic practices in my youth, I would take up my tanbur every night and play sacred music," said Ostad Elahi. "Voices were lifted... Sometimes I would find the room flooded with sunlight and then realize that I had spent the entire night playing the tanbur and singing."

Ostad Elahi is a fascinating figure, a unique 20th-century musical giant. His whole adult life he worked as a magistrate in Iran, yet he was acclaimed as a mystic embedded in a tradition of Islamic mysticism stretching back to the tenth century. Even after retiring aged 62, in order to devote himself full time to music and spiritual research, he never performed a concert either in public or for the radio. Yet at the end of his life his reputation in Iran was so great that Westerners such as Maurice Béjart and Yehudi Menuhin were drawn to visit him. Menuhin later wrote: "This marvellous musician was able to maintain a tension and concentration that I never imagined possible in the limited interval of a fourth or a fifth. It was very sensitive, very intense music, but also very precise and pure. I almost couldn't believe what I was hearing. It was a refined power, like some sort of laser."

Elahi's instrument of choice was the humble Kurdish tanbur, a long-necked lute associated more with the epic ballads of central Asian nomads than the sophisticated delights of Persian classical music. In fact, Elahi doesn't play Persian classical in the

strict sense, though that is one of the many traditions he studied. He is a prime example of a musician stepping out of the tradition, drawing on Persian, Azeri, pre-Islamic music, even Kurdish popular tunes, stretching all forms to his own visionary purpose. The tanbur would have been popular in the Kurdish north-western corner of Iran where Elahi grew up. As a magistrate on the move across the country he encountered the same instrument in Khurasan, in Iran's north east, and again across the border in Turkestan. Elahi was a musical omnivore, mastering bar, setar and violin, but always returning to his beloved tanbur – having beefed up the lute's range and volume by adding extra strings, he then just sat and played, either to himself or a small circle of relatives and friends.

Between 1984 and 1972, when Elahi was in his early 70s, someone finally got a microphone in front of him. These are no-nonsense, no-effects, mono recordings, and occasionally they sound like the teapot spilt on the tapes. But Elahi's earthy mysticism comes shining through, a relentless quest for the divine via the physical propulsion of playing, and then more playing.

In David Toop's new book, *Haunted Weather*, guitarist Derek Bailey recalls the 'playing fools' of early jazz, men who could not stop playing without outside help. Then there's Theodore Levin's remarkable book about Central Asian music, *The Hundred Thousand Fools Of God*, named for the dervishes, ascetics and outcasts who regard musicianship as a form of service, "assuming the moral weight of guiding humankind toward the just and the good". Ostad Elahi fits in here, alongside The Velvet Underground's "White Light/White Heat", another hard-strummed drive towards the ecstatic state, recorded at around the same time.

Elahi's recordings have excited interest beyond the usual World Music constituency. A Utah based company called Advanced Brain Technologies recommend listening to Elahi to give your auditory system a great workout – a gym for your brain, if you like. ABT's pilot studies confirm that "listening is

Clive Bell gives his brain a workout with the devotional music of an Iranian tanbur master

bringing improvements in various cognitive and auditory domains". To this end they have filtered the recordings and added backing and other natural sounds specially recorded in Tehran. *Le Chant Du Monde's* six albums on the other hand just offer the original music, cleaned up a little.

All these CDs of Elahi's solo playing have moments of delicacy (though Elahi's touch is never less than robust), singing of ancient prayers, and astonishing passages of string-snapping ferocity. Rhythms shift smoothly from seven-time to ten, to eight, as Elahi draws on material picked up in different corners of Iran – a travelling magistrate with a voracious ear.

The Celestial Music Of Ostad Elahi is a good place to start. The opening "Jelo Shahi Sultai" is 32 minutes of playing over the same drone, but Elahi shifts the tonal centre from mode to mode, so we feel the music is modulating naturally. Likewise his rhythmic sense is far from rigid. As his left hand flutters like a dragonfly in endless ornamentation, Elahi conducts the listener through metrical gear changes. This is spacious, large scale solo music, but never feels lost or meandering. Two thirds through, Elahi, by now immersed in an ocean of ornaments and riffs, chants the various names of God and the seven archangels. Later, the 18 minute "Sahen Suite", played at dawn to summon the dervishes to prayer, is great improvisation, showcasing the odd harmonic clashes that add surprise to Elahi's always individual style. The piece moves through a series of climaxes in which the sheer joy of Elahi's seemingly endless playing communicates strongly.

Mystical Orison is Elahi's homage to the saints of western Iran. This includes "Baba Faqi", a poem recalling the days when the price of attaining enlightenment could be death, as happened to one Mansur Hallaj in 922. In a moment of ecstasy he declared, "I am the Truth." in a voice on the verge of sobbing. Elahi sings of his own commitment to the hard path of divine love. "If, like Mansur, they should hang me on the gallows, I shall not renounce my Friend, no, I shall not renounce." □

sensitive out-rock arrangements that catch the ear, each melody carefully stage set and lit. His cryptically assembled words are suspended within translucent layers of mused instrumental sound, electronic chiaroscuro and floating atmospheric voice fragments. The 11 tracks fit together like complementary scenes that cumulatively deepen the mystery. The set's aesthetic mirrors elusive and, maybe, because of that, consistency of feeling is skilfully achieved in a series of successfully unifying gestures.

BRENT GUTZEIT DRUG MONEY

KRANKY CD

BY KEITH MOULNE

Chicago laptop musician, Boomeria label boss and TV Pow member Gutzeit has been releasing interesting short-run CD-ties of his diverse output for some time, but this Kranky release should help his work to a wider audience. It features some of the slowest music imaginable, dronoscapes that evolve so gradually that uncommitted listeners may find themselves losing interest, concentrations, perhaps the will to live. But stay with it and Drug Money reveals itself to be a strong, almost hallucinatory statement in the tradition of Daniel Menche or Kevin Drumm.

Using the processed sounds of electric guitars on piano strings, the opening piece "Plano Mono Skills 82" is the most sonically engaging of its four long tracks. It piles up a variety of metallic textures and performs, suggesting the gong explorations of Thomas Robert if his instruments were fashioned from the unknown alloys of distant planets. The following pair of tracks showcase Gutzeit as at his most daring. Both "Riding Horses" and "400 Blows" clock in at over 20 minutes apiece, but scale new heights of uneventfulness — a compliment in case you were wondering. While both pieces are extremely minimal in their almost total absence of development, they span a massive and complex chain of sound. Gutzeit focuses a disquieting sub-bass rumble that could loosen fillings at high volume, but the overall atmosphere created is strongly warm, meditative and enveloping. Nothing much happens, but it doesn't happen well.

The polar extremes of electronics are further pushed than ever. On the one hand the tightly spasmodic of the glitchologists are reaching new spaces of mania, while on the other the brooding atmospheres of the dronoscapes are approaching absolute zero. Drug Money just lowered the temperature a little further.

CM VON HAUSSWOLFF THREE OVERPOPULATED CITIES...

SUB ROSA CD

BY AMY HAYNES

Carl Michael von Hausswolff's Three Overpopulated Cities. Built By Short-Sighted Generations. An Unbalanced And Quite Dangerous Airport And An Abandoned Church — to give it its full title — is the second in a trilogy that began with *A Lecture On Disasters in Architecture*, making inquiries into the psychic and emotional impact that architecture has upon the greater populace. Obviously unencumbered with numerical accuracies for the title, Hausswolff has picked Lagos, Mexico City, Tokyo, Chicago and Bangkok

as the demagogic pool from which to collect his raw information, in the form of barely processed recordings of electrical field disturbances. Electricity and the power grid have been central elements within Hausswolff's body of work. In a number of installations from the mid-90s, he incorporated its physical presence as howled electric forces running through infinite white box galleries. More recently on *Question Of Sound Communication*, he adapted the belief of Electromagnetic Voice Phenomena researchers Raymond Cass and Fredrick Jurgensen that certain frequencies within the electromagnetic spectrum could make communication with the dead possible. For Three Overpopulated Cities, Hausswolff extends his ideas about electricity as an allegorical tale with political implications, claiming the electrical fields within these communities have been transformed as something of a pollutant and a toxin.

Very few of these ideas are self-evident within the actual recordings, which contrive his very formalist pursuits for a communicative value with no unnecessary ornamentation. Armed with wraparound microphones and a couple of cheap walkie-talkies, Hausswolff documents the electrical fields from these locations as deadened buzzings occasionally interrupted by murmurous tones and whirs. Aside from the dishevelled noise of walkie-talkie feedback on "Mexico City And Tokyo", the album is clinically devoid of activity. In its unassuming monotony, Hausswolff recalls the minimalist strategies of Joseph Kosuth, who turned his deconstructions about language and semantics with a calculated simplicity. Thus, the aesthetic composition of Three Overpopulated Cities may be irrelevant to Hausswolff's ultimate goal of asking the right question that could change the course of human events.

LARS HORNTVETH POKA SMALLTOWN SUPERBUND CD

BY JOHN MUCKEY

It would be nice to believe that the Norwegian band Jaga Jazzit operates as a kind of sprawling and anarchic democracy and that their raucous fusions of jazz, electronics and post-rock emerge organically from the contrabass of all its regular members. The debut solo album from Jaga's Lars Hornthveth, however, suggests the reality is less idealistic.

Poka is driven by a identical approach to melody and arrangement — at once starchy and playful — as much of Jaga Jazzit's work. 23-year old Hornthveth is clearly a very personal force in the group, and so the bulk of Poka sounds pretty much like their music played by a reconfigured ensemble. In place of Jaga's massed horns, Hornthveth depicts a nine-piece string section. And where their rhythmic foundation is built on the exuberant powerhouse drumming of Hornthveth's brother Martin, here the drums are exclusively electronic — a patchwork of flutter and sarrus reminiscent of Kim Hørbay (who contributes the CD's typically gorgeous sleeve art) or Fox Teeth's Kenan Heiden.

Hornthveth's deliberate substitutions mark him out as a disciple of Gil Evans as much as Torvald. While the strings arse and swirl, he solos unadventurously in the foreground, fitting between diaphanous (predominantly), acoustic guitar

and saxophone, but never disrupting his own grand structures. As a result, some may find Poka a little too tidy for comfort. Only a jolting edited guitar riff and some tougher beats on "I. Lesson In Violin" disrupt the warm, equitable atmosphere pervading the album. Meticulous and highly engaging stuff, nevertheless, and a nice diversion until the next Jaga Jazzit disc project — set to be produced by Plummer's Marcus Schneider — arrives next year.

PERCY HOWARD'S MERIDIAN A PLEASANT FICTION

NECESSARY ANGEL CD

BY MIKE BARNES

Formerly of Nils, vocalist, writer and producer Percy Howard first formulated Meridian in 1998 as a floating collective under his direction, which would operate along the lines of Arion Pier's Golden Palomares. He has assembled an impressive cast of 21 musicians here, including bassist Bill Laswell, Charles Hayward on drums, guitarist Buckwheat and Vernon Hand, and vocalist Jarboe, formerly of Swans. The music is intentionally counteractive to each inside the first song "The Girl On The Book Of A Motorcycle", one wonders if this might be a towering folly. Jarboe gives a sultry, heavy-voiced performance, based on Neil LaBute's poem The Incessant Trinity, between massed guitars and Howard's big rock yowl come in on each chorus. But although his vocals verge on the histrionic, they prove to be perfectly apposite in marking an elsewhere, striding the edge of the action. The track finally rises on a swelling wave of guitars and strings, and the drums shift into double time towards the fade.

After that epic statement comes "Mellie", a breathtaking melody beautifully sung by Healy Rhodes accompanied by delicate, spangly guitar and far off faze notes. It shows Howard's expertise at mixing up the broad brushstrokes with the finer details in his music. On Tim Buckley's "Close The Blues Away", he reconfigures the melody and imbues the song with more of an edge than the hushed introspection of the original. Typically, his production gives us a sonic persona that stretches way into the distance, Jarboe returns on "Carolina", her theatrical vocals perfectly suited to the melody and mood, turning emotion mid-phrase in a dialogue of sorts with saxophonist Jonathan Bjerly "The East" is based on an improvisation featuring Hayward, Laswell, Reed, Buckwheat and third guitarist Haroun Sereng, and finds Howard campy and contrasting larger than life rock-out stylings with an almost instrumental freedom. On songs like the Howard's music is strikingly original, but that he never completely pitches in with either camp but concentrates instead on pursuing his own vision.

JASON KAHN MIRAMAR SRR CD

JASON KAHN & JON MUELLER PAPER CUTS CROUCH CD

BY DAN WARDENSTON

I began to understand why Indian music has raged for different times of the day and seasons of the year" writes Zürich based American percussionist and electronicist Jason Kahn of



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his experience in Studio Melli in the French Pyrenees. A huge glass door allows natural light to flood Bob Drake's converted barn, whose high ceilinged acoustics helped shape the five tracks of *Memento* to such an extent that "loam" is credited on the album along with Kahn's analogue synthesizer and persuasion. As his title suggests, *Memento* is an audio version of gazing out at this season, hearing light reflect from the waves and imagining sound currents as gradual undulation of ebb and flow. Kahn's superimposed layers of synthesizer tones and distant churning percussion drift in and out of focus with the slightest movement on the part of the listener, resulting not only his work with Teshima Nakamura but the free-defying perfection of Elliane Radigue, alongside whose *Adras* and *La Voie De La Mort* Kahn's album can proudly stand.

While *Memento*'s rich drones feed from the acoustics of the listening space, the nuances of Popovics, a collaborator with Milwaukee percussionist and composer Joe Mueller for his *Croton* Impair, are best appreciated through headphones. Mueller has in the past based his compositions in sources as diverse as bicycles, boilers and boards, but for this work he and Kahn exchanged short compositions based on the sounds of paper. The album title also puns on the name of Kahn's Cut imprint, which was reworked and extended before Kahn compiled the final 18 minute mix. Kahn and Mueller were determined "not to leave the original source of the concept — paper — behind in a sea of digital sound processing." Instead they used the computer to enhance the inherent properties of the material by inverting background and foreground, bringing very quiet sounds forward and placing louder shredding and crumbling sounds further back in the mix.

GIYA KANCHELI DIP/LITO NOVA SERIES CD BY BRIAN MAURLEY

Since 1991, the year in which Giya Kancheli migrated from Georgia to the West, his music has received considerable exposure in concert halls and on CD. Dip/Lito is the seventh set of compositions to be issued by ECM — a major commitment to Kancheli's music on the part of label boss Manfred Eicher. The strings of the Subotnik Kammerorchester are conducted by Dennis Russell Davies, with whom in recent years Kancheli has established a strong working relationship, and the korsets who contribute to the title track are counterpointers Deke Lee Rahn and cellist Thomas Demme.

Wolfe Boston (1995) and Dip/Lito (1997), the two lengthy pieces comprising this hour set, sound, in common with most Kancheli compositions, like the work of a reluctant modernist. Shrewdly he employs certain technical innovations that originated with the avant garde, and he's unquestionably a man of our time, but his music is backward-looking, influenced more by Prokofiev and Shostakovich than the work of his contemporaries. Nonetheless always comes with a whiff of embalmment funk, and its rank note is definitely here. Kancheli points for what is viewed here — a more straightforwardly "classical" idiom. And for something altogether more elusive: the ineffable. Actually, yearning, his principal mode of

expression, permeates every aspect of the music, to the exclusion of most other moods. But consistency might be the whole point. "When a person goes into a church, synagogue or mosque," says Kancheli, "where there's no service going on, there's a special kind of silence. I want to turn that silence into music."

Wolfe Boston, for piano and strings, is either Kancheli's apology to his wife for never having danced with her or an apology. Its co-composer is Russell Davies, who plays the piano part, and he and the strings get the most out of the material. Although Kancheli makes enigmatic references to the walls, and there are dramatic eruptions and waxy interludes, he doesn't sufficiently vary the pace of the music, and its leaden solo soon becomes tedious. Even less varied but somewhat more appealing is *Dip/Lito*, in which the role allotted to Deke Lee Rahn is key like bleached counterpoint, with its limited expressive range, has an ethereal quality that Kancheli uses sparingly and very effectively. The words Rahn sings are, as Kancheli explains, "feelingless... from a Georgian epic", and the composition is prefaced with a quotation from Joseph Brodsky: "My work of silence, my mute creation." Nothing is denied and expressiveness restrained; all that's left is atmosphere. But atmospheres, however superbly evoked, isn't sufficient to make *Dip/Lito* and Wolfe Boston interesting, and Kancheli offers the listener little more. In his booklet notes, Hans-Klaus Jungheinrich describes the composer "reining himself back rhythmically through the other and thoughts of the West". It's an uncomfortably apt description of the music, too.

MIKE LADD NOSTALGIATOR STUDIO NO CD BY DEREK WALMSLEY

Mike Ladd's career as singer, producer and DJ/producer has thus far seen him defend the rap canon while conquering it as well, denounce and homagize radio into one. Ladd is a myth maker, producing self concept albums under his own name, an imaginary feud between his own intentions and Majesticks, and numerous guinea pig appearances. He outlinks this most self-important of genres with imagined dystopias, off the cuff propaganda and misanthropism. *Nostalgator* now marks a new angle of attack — a pop album, it's switching genres like channel surfing through alternative music TV. Rapping is just a part of the palette, much as Prince would occasionally goke the mic on his albums to provide a brief physical imperfection. And, as ever, lying just beneath the shiny surface is the critique.

Twisted sample-based confusion is present from the outset, with opener "Dare Strata Play Mumbung" padding fake crowd noise and bold-out, organic guitar samples atop a P-funk jupbeat. "Double Shot" is a knowing synthesis of brass and guitar stabs with distorted vocals, like Bob The Boss fronted by Mark Stewart. "Housewives At Play" is Bobby Conn-style disco voyeurism, equal parts sexual obsession and self-love, the smooth midnight course of the music infused by quilitated synth intrusions. The idea seeded by the album is that of a so-future envisioned by the cheap thrills of the *Nostalgator*, a dream machine that assigns future shock with pleasant experiences of more

comfortable times. Ladd's lyrics, whether sung or rapped, repeat a series of cheap thrills and cheaper sex — it's as if he's plugged himself straight into a data output machine. He the scenarios the album feeds off as fast, empty and alienating as the beloved nostalgic memories that are the theme of Dennis Potter's drama *Dark Lazarus*.

Amid the disquieting social commentaries, the only slider missing is the central figure of Ladd himself, changing roles too quickly to get a fix on. In the end it's suggested that moving to Mars might be the only way out of the mess created by modern man — an empty solution that begs the question as to the substance of Ladd's subversion. Yet for all that, *Nostalgator* is exhilarating, exorcising rhetorical rap fury in favour of a satirical masquerade ball of capitalist obsessions.

THE MEMORY BAND THE MEMORY BAND HUNGRY HILL CD BY MIKE BARNES

With its casual drams and gently pinging brass, the opening "Theme For The Memory Band" sounds like one of the community singalongs on *Future Pilot ARKS* Saliva Year Soul, while also nodding towards the more basic sound of a village band starting up. It sets the tone for the group's debut, which incorporates tracks from their EPs together with new material. If Kieran Hebdon's music as Four Tet has been given the rather unfortunate label folktronica, at least he isn't alone, not least because his bands and fellow group members in Fridge, Samsel, Adam Khan and drummer Sam Affles, appear here. Meet Memory Band with Stephen Gasdriel also records under the electronics pseudonym Goroosh and although its largely acoustic group are more folk than bollocks, they do incorporate subtle digital elements.

A song about wassailing, "Calling On", employs syncretized beats and distant trombones, while Craden's guitar evokes the flowing lines of Nick Drake and early John Maynard. Strangely serene, it's lifted by a gorgeous vocal incantation towards the close. "Out Of Now", meanwhile, grooves along with what could well be programmed. Mosey Dancin' ball pole — take that, Steeleye Span.

Based on the same traditional tune as Richard Thompson's "Travelled Farwell" and fashioned from a spacious web of piano, strings, violin and guitar, the wordless march called "Fanny Adams" is particularly haunting. Arthur Russell's "This Is How We Walk On The Moon" slips in seamlessly, its soft harmonies augmented by skittering percussion, strings and fluid guitar peckings. The subtly disorienting effect of this music is exemplified by "Once Bitten". In keeping with its dinky title tune, what sound like glitched and looped synthetic sounds turn out to be simply a recording of a bitzen.

MERZBOW LAST OF ANALOG SESSIONS MONUMENTAL CD BY KEITH WHELAN

It takes a special breed of artist who is unafraid to take the time to take their time, to reach out from her/his/their obsession of noise, to reach out, and create the conditions for their instrument to howl and bleed. Jiri Hendrik is the

obvious example, the young Phantom Sanders another: One could call the guitarist like Pops Keith Levene and Al Nance's Alex and Rudy, who stood gloriously by while their instruments showered metaphorical sparks. Or Eno's *Endeavour*

Rebels, who dispensed with amplifier and used their machines to produce the real thing. Surely the time has come to place Masumi Akita in this tradition, rather than continue to present him as some winging angel of serenity, a sadistic freak hellbent on befriending the listener into covering, used submission?

Caterpillar, the first of three CDs comprising this collection of work recorded on analogue equipment, is maximally compressed Techno, so distorted that the pulse all but dissolves, with the music's various submerged layers having to fight to breach the blasted surface for air. The second CD, *Mindways*, is wilder still, a sensory assault of fear and feedback that although mostly featureless, gives an outstanding momentism. At times the sound takes on a terrifying, full personality of its own, as it constantly contorts itself into newer and more harrowing shapes. At one point the noise even folds itself into language, or whose resonance to being deciphered one can't help but feel some relief. On the final CD, the much spacier *Springflur*, Akita deploys more complex tones and loops, but detests these to a sickeningly belated scale and forces them to do battle—a spellbinding war of extreme tonalities.

The thrilling collection is a fine place to start considering Masumi as a musician rather than just a cipher enveloped by noise theorists alongside Adorno, Barthes and Deleuze. Certainly he makes the perfect sound to test our notions of what that exactly "noise" can be. But on the evidence of *Last Of Analog Sessions*, there's plenty more to Akita than being a more sinister of some vague notion of cultural extremity.

MOUTHUS

MOUTHUS WITH CD

BY MARC MASTERS

Noise may be tough to judge objectively, but as with any genre, its extremes are obvious. Lifeless retreats are easy to spot, and fuzzy downer riddims are equally clear, leaving reminders of the trivialness of sound. Mouthus belongs in the latter category. The self-titled debut by the Brooklyn duo is a bottomless well of crashing gongs, roaring accelerations and rumbling cacophony drawing quality on the guitar energies of Radiohead's *Grey* or *Blue* Machines, the ragged loops of The Dead C, the overwrought Sightings, and the pulsing invention of free jazz. Brian Sullivan and Nate Nelson know *Sigil* a thick, gurgling soup of excessive sounds. Some pieces even resemble trash rock drools like *Pussy Gore* and *The Jesus Lizard*, but Mouthus have dragged that primitive noise up a new mountain of density and texture.

The method of Mouthus is basic: Each track forms mechanical rhythms out of repeated beats, accompanied by sprawling percussion, warping guitar loops and unidentifiable sounds placed at varying locales within the unending noise. Yet the area of contradictions feels intricate. The extremes "Thru Over" starts with muffled howling to a seduced din, while "Hood Of Shifting" is truly scary like a blurry loop from a slasher flick. "Great To Spot The Sea" ends things

in a frantic, fun, amazing distorted babbling over distorted guitar jangles worthy of Zort Romo. Throughout, Sullivan and Nelson construct a rhythm that's both angular and random. The chaotic sounds that piece a speaker at regular intervals feel like a test, yet their young experiment remains unpredictable. The expected trope that still shook upon arrival.

The duo clearly have more to say—in their forthcoming LP on Thurston Moore's Ecstatic Peace is one of 2000's more thinking proposals—but Mouthus have enough words verbiage to fill all the empty heads that could use it.

CONLON NANCARROW STUDIES AND SOLOS

WORLD CD

BY BRIAN MORRIS

Necessity may be the mother of invention, but who's its dad? It's often stated—and hinted at here—that Conlon Nancarrow gave up writing for conventional instrumentation to write for player pianos because he couldn't get adequate performances of his work in the USA. Therefore, in Mexican exile, he had to be alternative. And then there's the argument that says Nancarrow was looking for modes of articulation that went beyond human virtuosity, both in terms of actual talent but also as a way of leaching out the implicit emotionalism of a "virtuoso" performance.

Neither version is quite right though both contain strong elements of truth. Nancarrow didn't absolutely give up writing for human performers and for other instruments, and neither is his work utterly as generic. The most obvious influence, certainly from listening flesh to these lovely piano disc transcriptions played and mostly made by Nikola Buglino and Amy Williams, is Stravinsky's neoclassicism. It's there in the beautifully weighted asymmetrical phrases and in the undulatingness of the structures.

The pioneering transcriber of Nancarrow's player piano pieces for human performance was the late Yehu Mikhashoff, and with the discovery of an unpublished MS of Study #15 that led Buglino and Williams, with the help of composer Erik Oea, to start the investigations that led to this album. They also include Mikhashoff's lovely version of *Sonatina* from around 1945, the first score the composer wrote on punched paper rolls, and *Anglo's* written for the year's International Tangle Collection in 1984, the year of Nancarrow's belated public breakthrough, and the first work for a human player after 40 years of mechanical reproduction.

The other love was 1980's *Three Canons* for Ursula, but the really interesting stuff is earlier: a *Private* and *Blue* from 1935, the composer's first published pieces; the three tiny *Toy* from the late 1940s, and from the 1950s *11 Studies* for *Player Piano*, from the sequence of 50 such pieces, numbered but undated, in which Nancarrow constantly hints at Bach as well as Stravinsky.

Wily, Buglino and Williams have not attempted to imitate the specific attack and severity of Nancarrow's machines, which were modified with metal and leather to give a very sharp attack with a soft resonance and slight decay. These performances are much more conventionally pianistic, which perhaps makes them more immediately listenable and in doing so opens up their complex language. They reveal

Nancarrow not as some ideosyncratic Rube Goldberg of modern music, an exiled seaper who paid only perverse homage to the canonical instrument of Western classical music, but rather as a formidable technician working within the canons of the great but depleted tradition.

THE NECKS THE BOYS OST

REINTEGRATED CD

BY LOUISE GRAY

Originally released in 1998 on Wild Sound, this soundtrack album from Rowan Woods's film is that rarity: an OST that stands on its own merits. The isn't that surprising when you consider it's from The Necks, the Australian trio who seem to have spent the last 25 years doing things with a piano, bass and drum kit that no other group has really approached.

From the opening bars of *The Boys* theme—a ringing motif of piano notes, echoed by a drum and with some electronic soundings scurrying away in the background—you're in uncharted territory. Ambient? Jazz? Or, for that matter, a bit of the John Adams school of muscular minimalism? Whatever it conjures up the bedlam of Australia where the film is—an Antipodean *Taxi Driver*—is set. The sonic elevation of place is as well that one almost sees the screen doors of dingy houses banging in the wind, the wastelands yawning into the outdoors.

The group achieve this with an elastic take on their theme material. Punctured Chris Abrahams establishes a slow, barely building theme, and Tony Buck's muffled drums and stoked cymbals skirt around a suppressed violence. Lloyd Swenson's bass gives an architecture to the album which, while divided into seven tracks, always sounds very much as a whole. That becomes apparent in the third development of the film's theme. Suddenly the bass is swinging with a dangerous presence, the notes closing in on themselves, and Abrahams is pounding. Harsh electronics that have been burning in the background now forward. It's brilliant in its execution and shocking in its effect.

JIM O'Rourke TWO ORGANS

THREE POPULARS LP

BY JIM HARRIS

Jim O'Rourke's ubiquitous presence continues to loom unabated across the musical landscape. His recognizable fingerprints have smeared the boundaries between avant-garde practices and the multifaceted stylistic surfaces of pop music, with the most recent 2004 albums being the *Sonic Youth* album *Sore* (Nonesuch) and his production of Wilco's *A Ghost Is Born*. Yet, he has been more than two years since O'Rourke has released any new solo material. The publication of his *Two Organs* record doesn't really count, as it is an archival recording that dates back to 1991. In his interview with David Keenan in *The Wire* 213, O'Rourke had mentioned that Organum's David Jackman was interested in putting out some material that O'Rourke had been working on while at Cornell University through Christoph Henemann's *Don't Label*. While that never materialized back then, it has been published now by Three Potions, the imprint responsible for the art editions from Henemann's elemental drone ensemble *Mirac*.

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Soundcheck

Back in the early '90s, O'Rourke had often been referenced as the guitarist from *Ilusion* of Salery, implying that his solo work would wield a similar metaphorical hammer and bludge psychology as his fellow post-industrialists. Obviously, this assumption proved to be wildly incorrect. In retrospect, very little of his earliest work, including the solo guitar drone marathons of *Temper* and the brilliant musique concrète of *Sloer*, had anything in common with *Ilusion* of Salery. Two O'gians further that distance as an immaculate presentation of the formalist pursuits of high minimalism. This composition ripples with the phase patterns of sustained organ tones softly beating against each other on an extended period of time. Phil Niblock's flute composition and Terry Riley's timbral accumulations are obvious citations for O'Rourke, who even at this young age had such a keen ear as to render the simplicity of minimalism with a precision and a delicacy that is rarely heard even from the masters of that genre. Every once in a while, Jim O'Rourke provides the evidence as to why he still commands such a huge cultural cachet, and *Two O'gians* is a prime example of his craftsmanship.

CCS

NARNACK CD
BY MARC MATTERS

CCS is the 10-4 acoustic guitar project of John Dwyer, formerly of noise attack duo Pink and Brown and currently of The Coaxinos, a reggae/ska San Francisco trio who artfully blues through overloaded amps and mixed-out recording equipment. Given the aggression of Dwyer's other pursuits, the muffled, soft quality of 2 is a departure, and while some tracks feel like skeletal double, the majority are full of sharp ideas denuded in an intoxicating distance.

2 mostly features raw, amplified Foley pecking, accompanied by sparse rattles and the occasional whispered wail, all buried beneath layers of muffled reverb and thick tape hiss that surface noise is both an instrument and as atmosphere, creating an enigmatic awareness that recalls the tortured moans of Daniel Johnston and the howling loneliness of Jandek. Dwyer is equally adept at primitive folk semi-songs and cloudy tonal abstractions ("I Would Own in Ragged" sounds like a traditional Southern hymn phased in from a graveyard, while "BOS C" is all echo and drone, the original string phrasing that created it seeming to have

occurred decades ago. The best tracks, however, throw all of Dwyer's legs—noise, delicacy, distance and melody—into one crumbling fire. "Let Me Dry" combines tuneful Jandekian string-beating with a catchy chorus that stacks the song's chaos into order, while "Henry Sold, For Rent" uses its warped baroque line like a stuttering brain struggling to come unstuck. 2 gas was water as it goes along, with scratchy vocals and jumbled vocals worshipping their way inside the album's thick skin. The final track, a tape of a child retelling a Goldilocks story, replaces the album's blurry mix of enigmatic sound with too definite verbiage. But by then, 2 has so entranced that even Jandek can't ruin its mystery.

ORGANUM VACANT LIGHTS/RARA AVIS CIS 5047 CD

BY JIM MATTERS

"With my work, the programme for each release is exactly the length that it needs to be," explains David Jackman from a 1991 interview originally for *Gleanings*, "so short or long isn't really an issue." For more than 20 years, Jackman has amassed a huge catalogue of minuscule-edition releases for both his solo recordings and his ensemble Organum. These productions, which lie at the furthest peripheries of public consumption, have often frustrated a very loyal constituency of Jackman/Organum fans by the sheer paucity of material found on these recordings. Despite the implications that a double disc set might actually spread around for more than two hours, Organum's Vacant Lights/Rara Avis maintains the Jackman/Organum protocol for brevity: Disc one clocks in just over 34 minutes, disc two a quick 19 minutes. Of course, for Jackman, time isn't really an issue.

Vacant Lights dates back to 1988 and boasts the claim that the recording took less than an hour to make, while the sleeve took six months to put together. Unfortunately, only the back cover to Jackman's absurdist artwork is embellished on the CD release. During that loss here, Jackman asked Dr. Jane Rose, Steven Shapiro, and Peter McGee to join him behind IPS Studio, where they all quietly droned pipes, glass bottles and chains over concrete surfaces. Jackman occasionally interjects his delicate shakuhachi to the muted clamor of these actions, effectively softening the industrial clang. The amount of subtlety throughout Vacant Lights is consistently low and occasionally

comes across as little more than a field recording. Nevertheless, its restrained calm holds a stoic elegance that renders the quietest Organum record one of the best. *Rara Avis* collects field tracks from incredibly rare singles, one of which is the "Hibokusa" single sided 7, with a pressing of a mere 50 copies. For these pieces, Organum treads familiar territory, with the bedrocked drums evoked from the acoustic stridency between glimmering textures created from bowed cylinders, scraping metals and growing guitar tones. Well it not been for the baffling decision to release this as a double disc set, Vacant Lights/Rara Avis would be perfect.

PAN AMERICAN QUIET CITY KMANRY CD

BY DEREK WALMSLEY

Mark Nelson's recording career began five years ago with *Laboratory*, whose lonely, wordless ambience sounded like Angelo Badalamenti composing for a syncretic drift in a space capsule. As Pan American he has explained a contrasting universe of sample and loops based microcosms, but this fourth RA album comes full circle and recombines the live instrumentation and vocals that gave *Laboratory* their living, breathing personal quality. This, then, is the most complete Mark Nelson album thus far.

Even the lengthy instrumentals here observe a trajectory of build and release (or inhalation and exhalation), giving the spacious Ambient music an episodic structure akin to songs or ballads. Nelson's musical palette has always gravitated towards lovelier vocals, with echoed lines on both electric and classical guitars played with the careful deliberation of writing a love letter. Quiet City has a stark melodic lyricism that makes the similarly somber post-rock explorations of Silver Mount Zen or Godspeed 'You! Black Emperor feel hopelessly confused. On "Hail And Slaylight," a mid-song pause is suddenly filled with a swelling brass ensemble akin to a wireless gospel choir—a moment of epic tonalities mixed with a clear emptiness that, say, Spiritus's gospelly member arrangements lack the refinement to match. Comparing the "forming in space" aesthetic of these two groups would be like comparing the enigmatic limbo of Taravsky's Solars with the big 'w' factor of sci-fi blockbuster *Interact*.

Moments of Quiet City recall Ennio Morricone, Augustus Pabli, Panzer-era Pink Floyd, and, in its more intimate moments, the whispered

American angst of The Four Carnation. But simply listing references obscures the deeply personal symbolism that Mark Nelson achieves on Quiet City. Whereas *Laboratory* evoked a hopeless solitude, Nelson finds resolution in Quiet City's warmly melancholy guitar notes and beaming melodies. It's a music that requires no prior knowledge nor specialized critical tools, yet achieves real profundity. As Mark Nelson's first work since *Laboratory* first emerged a decade or so ago, Quiet City is the consummate rendering of his atmospheric muse.

PASSAGE THE FORCEFIELD KIDS ANTHON CD

BY MOBI REEVES

Much of the music of Oakland, California's Anticon collective is driven by a need for cathartic self-expression. Passage's first solo album, *The Forcefield Kids*, is no different, but it is more than just a purely emotional release. Far from adopting fellow Anticon member Sol's fighting stance against real and perceived enemies, Passage is more of a social critic, skewering issues like America's criminalization of youth on the track "Creature In The Classroom." Deliberately provocative song titles mask complex ideas: "The Unpredictable Whiteboy Slave Song," for example, is an anti-racism rap that posits, "White boys ain't got no slave song/So we needed darkness/Who else other than us Black/Bread shoulders would go out and build an Harem?"

Although *The Forcefield Kids* is mired as a satire of sex angst, not much of it is very funny. Despite songs such as "Old Aunt Mary With Purple Teeth," that's because one often can't make out the jokes. Passage talks, the Anticon crew has always had a problem with diction, and Passage's use of fast rap techniques frequently blurs his words. Even when he sings in a folk style on "Old Aunt Mary," his voice sounds so dreamy and waxy that his lyrics often float away in the process.

Produced by Passage himself, *The Forcefield Kids* has a lively, acidic and electronic sound that invites worldly comparisons to its title. The music audibly sounds warm and human, yet protected by a sharp, biting wit. Some songs rely on the now classic Anticon formula of drab orchestral samples over boom-bap tracks, others are harsh blasts of synthesizer noise. Cumulatively, it lives up to Public Image Ltd.'s standard for death disco.



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LEE PERRY UPSTERS 14 DUB BLACKBOARD JUNGLE

ALTRULUX CD
BY STEVE BARKER

Imagine Miss Daisy's Bitches Brev or Arta Merid's *Electric Ladyland* as originally issued in a limited edition and then only available infrequently over the years in reissues, more or less bootleg versions. Well, that was the fate consigned to the album may reggae buffa consider Lee "Scratch" Perry's most important contribution to reggae, if not his first achievement. Although contesting the title of "first dub album" with Prince Buster's equally ill-served *The Message* and Chris Christie's more accessible *Joe Love Dub*, the album that became known as *Blackboard Jungle* was an altogether different thing, as Scratch met King Tubby to toughen up some of the Upsetter's already toughest rhythms.

Pressed in Jamaica as a pre-release with a run of only 300 copies, of which 100 were brought to Britain to be snapped up by sound system operators, *Blackboard Jungle* remained available in the UK until now. In the absence of original master tapes, the sound is refreshingly remastered as analogue technology from the cleanest vinyl copy available, and it's ear-popping stuff. Signaling a great leap forward sonically, the opener is a flute and horn version of "Bucky Skank". The rhythm that bedded the original that is stretched, squeezed and blown apart in space, with echo, reverb and delay creating vast canyons of sound within the now fairly familiar framework of the riddim tune. The trombone version of the same rhythm pulls back into the abyss and onto a jazzier plane, what follows bears a stylistic affinity that was neither typical of Tubby nor Scratch, although both would inherit elements of the sonic risk-taking that threads through the discs here. Three Walker songs ("Dreamland", "Kaya" and "Keep On Moving"), Junior Byles's reputation plant "Praise Called Abroad", The Hornet's urgent "You Can Run" and a Dillinger voice tribute to Tubby on "Dub Organiser" are all treated to levels of multi-board manipulation and effects applications that, if not entirely new, certainly had not been used before in such combinations. Four bonus tracks are sourced from the later classic Black Ark period of the mid- to late 70s, when Perry hit both sonic and commercial milestones. This is a welcome, quality addition to the now overblown Scratch canon – especially the new riddim to Upsetter Rasta Groovedom, the reggaeably racy "Upsetting Rhythm #2".

DER PLAN DIE VERSCHWÖRUNG

MARINA CD
BY KEN HOLLINGS

24 years after first leaving the drawing board and 15 since last shipping out software, Der Plan V4.0 has arrived. Of course, computing and communication systems have changed a little since Der Plan's earliest days in Düsseldorf, but as too has the group's personnel. A detailed flow chart reproduced in the lovely designed booklet accompanying this release pays tribute to members past and present. For the current version, the only surviving member of the original trio, Monte Reichelt is joined by Künstler: Reiz from instant disco outfit Düsseldorf & Ruz Love's JJ Jones. The result is a tougher, hard edged, less harmonious take on Der Plan's sprightly electro-pop playfulness. Sports anthems, popular reminiscences and off-kilter jingles are out, vocoders, guitarists and body-shaking beats are in. And why not? Der Plan were always past masters of that dubious form of satire in which things are presented exactly as they are. Der Plan were keen precisely because you couldn't see the joke. The views they offered on modern Germany might consequently be considered 'childlike', only if the child in question happened to be the one photographed by Diane Arbus clutching a toy hand grenade and gazing at the camera. A similar principle applies to *Die Verschwörung* (*The Conspiracy*), where the anxious forces of the global economy are exposed for all to see, from the juddering impact of the New York City's twin towers reproduced on the album's new sleeve to the children's chorus deploring the vagaries of Digital Rights Management on "Copyright Lion". Elsewhere, the mythic clothes of "Germany, Pale Mother" are dragged giggling around the dancefloor on "Deutschland Bleibte Mutter", and the traditional childhood poem "Dunkel Wank" is given a sinister reworking on the closing bonus track. Come the time, comes Der Plan for you, Horatius, they're still got it.

HORATIU RADULESCU LAO TZU SONATAS

CPO CD
BY ANNE HAMILTON

Lao Tzu, an older contemporary of Confucius, founded the dominant Chinese philosophy of Taoism. His book *Tao Te Ching* advocates a 'Tao', or way that renounces worldly desires. In his three Piano Sonatas from the 1990s – the

second, third and fourth – Romanian spectral composer Horatiu Radulescu is inspired by Lao, appealing phrases from the Tao to his scores. The inspiration is indirect. Such fiercely individual, powerfully expressive music hardly expresses an ethic of renunciation. However, an ancient historical awareness permeates Radulescu's music. The creator of spectral techniques views them as "a conceptual reply (2000 years later) to Pythagoras", discoverer of the natural harmonic series at spectrum.

Born in 1942 in Bucharest, Radulescu's vision is totally singular. His most poetic creations totally parallel the colossal Fourth String Quartet with its tape part for a further eight quartets, or *Clepsydra* for 16 "sound rooms", grand pianos on their sides whose strings are moved to produce a tremulous "sound plasma". The sonata here for a conventional instrument – has five compositions for it since the sonata of 1988 – are specially inspired, with some mimicking of spectral effects not achievable with normal tuning. The soundtrack is also no other, elemental and yet totally contemporary. The Third Sonata (*You Will Endure Forever*) is the most substantial at 25 minutes. The opening movement uses the theme from a 13th century Byzantine hymn, while the third acts a traditional Romanian folk melody. The meandering spring rhythm of the first movement is described by the composer as "cosmic Scriabin".

The minute long third movement of the Fourth Sonata bears Radulescu's motto "Music... older than Music". 30 seconds of music based on two superimposed Romanian carols are followed by 30 seconds of resonance. Owen Stillever, a longtime interpreter of Radulescu, gives potent, measured performances of this intricately structured yet compelling and memorable music. Transcendent mysticism meets scientific rigor in a modern day music of the spheres.

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JACK ROSE RAAG MANIFESTOS

WIP CD
BY TONY HERRINGTON

The fourteenth, that was how Old De Sack's Gerni Jaws referred to John Fahey from the stage of the recent *Lo Weekend* festival in Shilling, Scotland. It's no secret that for acoustic guitarists like Jones and his occasional collaborator Jack Rose, Fahey is a monumental figure, comparable to, and as impossible to ignore as, John Coltrane for the way he took the harden, irremovable material of an American folk form and molded it to a vision that was utterly singular and idiosyncratic but simultaneously cosmic, able to expand to accommodate the world that surrounded it.

Jones's recent solo album, *This Is The World That Flows It Out*, sounded like a disciple's homage to Fahey's laid-back reimagining of the topography of traditional American guitar music, if not the complex inner life that drove it. But on *Raag Manifestos*, Rose sounds further removed from Fahey than he was on his previous solo recordings. Red Horse, White Horse and *Opium Music*, while the distance separating him from the greatest root causes of fingerpicking guitar, ex Mississippi John Hurt, Reverend Blind Gary Davis, Blind Willie McTell et al, new sounds gather even more than that dividing Arty Doyle from Coleman Hawkins.

Indeed, *Raag Manifestos* sounds more like an attempt to expand on the fingerpicking philosophies espoused by Fahey's organic associates, Robbie Basho. For some, Basho's solo guitar music, and reputation, will always be compromised for inspiring Will Ackerman to launch the Windham Hill label and with it the cosmopolitan coffee table eclecticism of New Age music. But it would be more accurate to think of Basho occupying a parallel autonomous zone to Angus MacLise – a venerable autodidact, making intuitive connections across ostensibly alien musical systems, from the hoodwink to the raga, dreaming up a new universal music that would be truly poetic rather than merely picturesque. From Basho, much of the music on *Raag Manifestos* sounds rooted in traditions far removed from the American south, as Rose exotifies on turnips and scales sourced from Indian and other indigenous Eastern sources. Many of the songs track move with an almost flamenco flourish, notes flying like sparks from the fire stoked by Rose's notating, steel-edged fingers. Sometimes the notes are so densely packed, the intervals so close, they gather into great swarms of sound (an equivalent to Basho's snowstorm technique) that descend and envelop the listener in ways no less dramatic nor overwhelming than the guitar music of a plugged-in, if not amplified performer like Koji Haseo.

On the final track, Rose reconnects with the fourteenth, achieving a hazy version of the spiritual "Blessed Be The Name Of The Lord", a reading that recalls Fahey's own Banquo observations of similar sacred material. A hymn, as always, to end, as the master once instructed.

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Screen till you screw: Fishsticks



As with several other good records, the new one by Southern California's **Fishsticks**, *I Don't Wanna* (Rhino/Go! 7"), reveals that you push it into before you play it. Once you've done that you get a flood of classically styled SoCal proto-punk, with more of that dad-ass punk-pop stuff that has made so many recent punk outfits as lame as toast. This music has a crazy edge, a line handle on noise and weird highlighting guitar. Screen till you screw. Or something like that.

Sorta sad to think of **Cotton Casino** leaving the warm embrace of A&M Mothers Temple, but at least her owners with the goons, *Heb Good Chick/Where My Boy* (Oxide 7") is hot and dreamy. Anyone who has had the pleasure of seeing this laugh Japanese psych unit knows that Cotton's presence has always added a certain counterbalance to some of the group members' more formal psychodelia. At any rate, the single's great, with layers of wet fabric pressing against clouds that press against the meat in your head. Quite a lovely sensation, really.

Buckets And Batteries are a group of noisy avant musicians from central New Jersey, although their debut record, *Sacred Performances From The Vm Of Nigebond Life* (DHR 7") was recorded outdoors in a few different spots in New England. Wildly disorganized and tough to place in terms of temporal or stylistic whorls, their sound is somewhere between Sanburned Hand Of The Man, The Peoples' Victory Orchestra & Chorus, and Starship Beat. It's a damn fine mix, though not for everyone. And the rage at which this record's cover sheds glare is likely to upset more than one collector's girlfriend, so if you buy it, bag it fast.

The **Designer Babies** may have a point in (more or less) describing themselves as the Melt-Banana of Nottingham. On their second release, *Badly Beguiled/R Mut* (Briggo 7") they combine lots of elements stolen of small pieces in ways that are entertaining and noisy. Of course, doing the kind of fast, hard editing that some of the Japanese groups have perfected requires a kind of rigorous looseness that is hard to mimic. It's impossible to tell from this solo recording just what these guys are like, especially live, but it's a goddamn interesting record. It might lack the overwhelming left of something like Lightning Bolt, but then so do I.

My knowledge of Greek groups to looser this century than it has been at other times, but that won't stop me from listening to the new EP by **Dreg-o-lak**, (*Unlabeled* 3" Splendid Sound 7"). There's damn little info anywhere in the package, although the poster in which the record is wrapped is lovely. And really, so is the music. Primarily instrumental, it ranges from happy analogue-sounding synth recreations to nice and spacial atmospheric pieces, which are almost like Augustus Pablo playing on top of a slowed down Hammond album. The other releases from this series are equally interesting and mysterious. There's *Following The Path* (Splendid Sound 7") by **Vassile Tsouvolos**. Vassile is best when he performs as a solo electric guitar player. His playing is perhaps a bit in the Vini Reilly school, utilizing a beautiful sense of space and rhythmic composition. Third is *The Sound Of Young Helmshere* (Splendid Sound 7") by **The Septemberist** (aka Andrew Johnson, ex-Hood). This one consists of three slowly unfolding minimalist collages that shift time with surprisingly delicate electronic flags. And the packaging is gorgeous throughout. What I could figure out exactly when they originate from.

Listening right now to a nice collaboration between **Dynasty Wolf Swains** and the omnipresent **John Wiese**, *Sacrament Ghosts/Castle Vm* (Hellecaper 7"). Wiese succeeds (as usual) in making an impressively large racket and he makes the free rock slip action of DYS sound more like a jet engine than you'd ever imagine it could. My copy also came with a CD sampler of material due this year from Wiese's Hellecaper label, and it all sounds mighty choice.

The new split by **Hella** and **Fortet** is the first in a proposed series of single singles. We'll see what shakes loose. In the meantime, *Father's Both When I Am Alone And We Both Are Both* (V7") is another lovely slip of sampled sound construction. It manages to ago and soothe simultaneously. Nice. And *Hella* (*From Swings*) *Sacrament* does nicely as guitar/drum duo demotions that are right up with their previous output. What a wonderful future we're talking about.

There's a divided information gap surrounding the EP I received from **Hot Tub Collective**. Presumably from Southern California, this aggregation has left no traces on the Web,

but their record, *Solo #1* (Alpha 7") is really quite heavenly. The A side is some electric guitars, woodwind around as though they're being handled by two slightly hyperventilating teens, stored on good pop, playing along to "Sweetest Girl", while they sit in a darkened bedroom under headphones. The three tracks on the flip have a light, lost and found shimmer, moaning nothing so much as good pop itself.

The **Huncher** debut album was one of the most pleasing new slabs of avant garage garbage since since I drink what. Now, they're back with a three song triple, *Rock Disco Body/Where I Became You/Black's Voices* (In The Red 7"), that extends their much philosophy in several sleepy directions. Perhaps the most interesting is the first track, which makes a rather potent argument against relativist views regarding some of the more danceable musical tropes of the 1960s/70s. These guys may not have been born while this shit was going down, but that doesn't mean they aren't entitled to their opinion about it.

Nice new clearly split single shared between the Pacific Northwest's prolific **Josh Jensen** and Milwaukee's **Jim Mueller** (who also runs the Creation Music label), *Entitled Solo Perfection For Two* (No label 7") the two sides are just as the title suggests — percussion solos of an extremely organic, almost hermetic nature. Jensen's side is said to have been recorded using driftwood, and indeed, it does make me imagine what it must be like to be a box into which people throw small pieces of timber. Mueller's side, which I may or may not be playing the right speed, sounds more like thunder trapped inside an elephant's leg. So it's hard to pick a favorite.

For some time, Austrian audio/visual artist Markus Bressl has been releasing dreamy Web-only EPs under the name **Machete**. Now, he has decided to release a couple of pieces on vinyl. The result is *lava class/room alone* (Kling Galerie 7"), two nice pieces of gentle electronic invention. They both contain more hints of beat and melody than you might want, but their ambience remains dark, fractured and abstract enough to hold your attention.

Normal Music have a very nice take on glitch, as evidenced on *Rev* (Zero Music 3" CD), their way of subverting the autonomy of beat regularly, as well as their approach to the daisy layering of various analogue and digital noises,

put them far ahead of a largely sleepy herd. The basics here get so cranked at times that I imagine this'll be capable of breaking people's bones on the dance floor if played at the right time and volume. Cool!

Debut's **Princess Dragonman** have a yearly ritual, for which they create a *Haunted House* (part of a record, sealed down *Haunted House*) every year for Halloween. Their recent release, *PDM's Haunted Tube* (Time Stereo 3" CD), will give you a 19 minute taste of what a ride through the tube would be like. Even less formally coherent than PDM's regular releases, this is a dip into a very lost sound space. It may be a little similar to what you'd experience if you were a noodle for Wolf Eyes on their Japanese stadium tour. A related release is *Live At Worm*, Rotterdam: *Mahomed Jone*, 2001 (Time Stereo 3" CD) by **Electric Bear**, one of Davin Brainerd's PDM offshoots. (On the release, anyway) they present a face that is more noisily monolithic, filled with rushes of non-hush feedback that will chill your drink faster than crushed ice. Lots of these sounds may also enjoy Meets (Time Stereo 3" CD), which features **Davin Brainerd** and a couple of others using a virtual pile of noise as musical source material. You'll feel like grabbing a stool and jolting in.

Although their name is a cruet lie (they are neither), **Nottingham's Wolves** (they're from Greece) are an outfit both hep and hot. The vocals are whiny enough at their inn to make you think about Steve Marley's bathtub, but the general blare on their debut, *Nottingham's Wolves* (Dinge 107) paints a noise rock picture that is somewhere between Lightning Bolt at their mildest and Shellac at their most evil. There's a wonderful sense of sea-saw dynamism here, and enough will to make anyone sensible do headstands while it plays. Out!

Mystery disc of the issue is an anti-record that was sent anonymously using the Residents' classic *Duck Snub* EP as its basis. The disc itself has been subjected to a series of radiant burns on each of its sides, and the front cover has been pierced through its center by an unusual looking paper binder, which also affixes a blank sheet of cardboard to the rear. It's fun to say, but I won't set any needle to it. There was a time (in the classic RRR anti-record one) that I kept a tape recorder exclusively for playing such stuff. Now I'm a goddamn lightweight. Reviewed by Bryan Coley

The Compiler

Various artists: reviewed, rated, reviled

Slipping sharp: Rheda Dawes at Freedom On The City

The annual Freedom Of The City at London's Conway Hall continues the tradition — or anti-tradition — of Denik Bailey's Company Week. Organizer Martin Davidson presents one-off groups appear together with established acts, which appear on the compilation from last year's event on his own label **Freedom Of The City 2002: Small Groups** (Envision 2XCD). Eight groups contribute a track each. Among the outstanding items is "Spokes", by the duo of John Batters (soprano and tenor sax) and John Edwards (double bass) — two of the most committed free improvisers, with seemingly not a jazz bone in their bodies, in a beautifully poor performance of great intensity. Another duo — Stefan Kusan on soprano sax with John Russell on guitar — smokes pipes, hoots and explosive interjections on "Mama, I Say Hello", with Kusan producing a range of bird calls and turkey gobbling on the svelte soprano. "Cybele" by Rheda Dawes (harp), Mark Westell (cello) and Simon H Fell (bass) is music of space though sometimes dramatic gestures. Other performers include the trio of Alan Tanikawa, Steve Beresford and Roger Turner, and Alan Millen, Marco Matos and Steve Noble. (AH)

Fans of the *Isis* spin-off will greet the term "jazz odyssey" with a smile. As the *Isis* guitars have been observed, "Isis is just a series of mistakes without the 'rock'." It wouldn't have enjoyed **Europe Jazz Odyssey: Adventures in European New Jazz And Improvised Music** (Europe Jazz Odyssey CD), then. The CD arises out of the European Union United Initiative to create a platform for cultural cooperation in jazz through member states. There are ten contributors, the best of which are mildly diverting, the worst execrable. Worst of the worst is "Ain't It Fun" by the *Angen* Big Band and Mathias Ringe (of Vienna Art Orchestra), a clanking, head-on blues which is neither art nor fun. Inevitably *Consciousness* (Dutch trio) Sound Of Chaos, led by electric guitarist Haze Poulson, and French string ensemble (Quatuor big) provide a tedious rock wigout (volume turned all the way up to 11!) brookened by slabs of nondescript classical music. Slightly more interesting but rather longwinded is Matthew Bourne's "The Electric Dr. M. Part I (Dog-Do)" which, noodles along like a Weather Report outtake. Best of the bunch is the trumpet solo "Karni Vena (Black Mountain)", with its schizophrenic stylings, combined by Sepiher's Art Herndon. One of the European's maritimes is "Increased bureaucracy leads to mediocrity". Europe Jazz Odyssey won't bring

about a change of mind. (BM)

Melatonin: Meditations On Sound to Sleep (Room 2XCD) is a collection of mesmerizing Ambient shimmers, featuring contributions from Marina Rosenfeld, DJ Rupke, Scanner, David Tapp and others. It's not the first time that electronic music has addressed the concept of sleep. Tanager's *Goshawk's Music to Sleep By* is a great recent example. But it is probably the first to cite melatonin, a naturally occurring brain hormone, also used by many as a sleep aid, as an inspiration (move over, LSD and ecstasy). One can only suspect that compilations based around melatonin and goldensleep will follow. The tracks have dreamy titles like "Melting Into Moonlight" and "Bedtime Lullaby (Warm Milk)". No two pieces are alike; each reveals the unique stamp of the artist who made it. Some are despondent and full of gentle jolls, others are quietly even drones. Chink's chirp, wind howls, forest echoes. The melatonin theme is also implicated in dreaming, and some of that half-conscious quality is reflected in tracks like Al Yamamoto's "Dreaming Of Swimming In Green Emerald Water".

In his cryptic sleeve notes, Lawrence English observes that "reading is noted by many sleep researchers to be a quite unusual process, whereby words simply fall off the page." He goes on to suggest that the same is true for the sounds we hear in dreams. But as a whole, much of this collection veers on being too nothing, too soft, and too pale and watery, like a cup of weak camomile tea. After listening to all 23 tracks, one wishes for some big crashing rumbles, or anything loud and shocking to shake up all the subtlety, because, as anyone with a childhood fear of monsters knows, sleep can be a very scary thing. (GB)

Who Wants To Be A Millionaire (Hanging CD) opens with the infectious Gay McIntosh ("Hello I'm a film and TV composer") explaining how he longs to send your music to 7000 of Hollywood's top directors and music supervisors. All you have to do is compose a 45 second theme for a new TV quiz show, dreamed up by the creators of the unquizzable *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire*. Dreaming allowed? This irresistible opportunity was foisted on the cover CD of a music tech mag, and *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire* has offered it as inspiration to 15 dangling non-TV composers. The original music for *Millionaire* (thankfully not included here) was split up there with hot Chris Tarrant's demeanor as one of TV's most heartless obnoxious fixtures. The resultant compilation is a sort of confertment from offbeat laptopa buff, directed at the brown-nosed soul who compose TV music — a cheap way of TV speak over dry edgy beats.

Fierce work from Jyropo, Donna Summer (aka Jason Forrest) and Mordant: Harald "Sack" Ziegler knocks out a hilarious parody of aspiring homemade music, all stumbling guitar and baby howling in the background. Ziegler's eschews beats in favor of an abstract mini-drama, while Richard Ehlers disperses with somnolence altogether in his jittery Swingbeat fantasy Vert (aka Adam Bell) goes for beautiful, charming the TV master's voice into soul and painting a dreamy seascape with a splash of accordion. All reminding us that the answer to the CD's question was traditionally, "I don't!" (CB)

In 2001 the Quebec audio art collective Auzar, founded by Christl Mignone and Jocelyn Robert, invited eight composers to remix at will from the *Avatar* 1990s back catalogue. The outcome was **AVATAR** (Auzar CD), an album of original material in which the remix disc is a trigger, but largely irrelevant to appreciation of the music. Ralf Wenhofsky builds a dark, twinkling landscape of mystery, and David Kretzen also has his eye on a far horizon across a shimmered desert — those two standouts are dieline tracks for misanthropes and Alain Robbe-Grillet fans. Martin Willebrandt's main source of sounds has the best title: "A Block Of Brown Sound With Two Holes". Alexandre St-Onge washes us down with winter-than-white noise. Christian Culas, Tere Thierrietz and Dave Laroche all contribute substantial pieces. John Dawd focuses on very specific material. "Dhymone" is an absurd drama, a man and woman lost in telephone non-communication, while "Richter" is a swelling flood of pines. An intriguing collection, though nothing feels really essential. (CB)

Grand Meets B-Bop Downtown (EMI CD) is a compilation by Dan Layla of "The Hip Hop Sound Of New York 1981-82", that pivotal urban moment when Sugarhill rap was giving way to something more double and minimal, when dub was coming up at kinds of new gears in the mix, and when Afrika Bambaataa was blowing white his copes of Koolhaas's *Now-Europe* (Europe) and the Man Machine on the turntables the influence of the latter beats directly on tracks like the *Freeform Five* "Rockin' It", panned ensemble rap underpinned by Teutonic glides.

This compilation admirably depicts the sonic topography of NYC in the early 80s, including not only obvious landmarks like *Grandmaster Flash's* revolutionary montage "The Adventures Of Grandmaster Flash On The Wheels Of Steel" but also the esoteric, on-curb Bronx sniffling around in search of something hot and fresh. Malcolm McLaren's "Buffalo Gals" is excluded

here, hard to dislodge despite its opportunism, as is the Clash's "Outside Broadcast", the original white rockers' noises practically obliterated in a dub meltdown. For all their currency about black music, the Clash buckled under the weight of its influence. Some minor tracks prove marginally illuminating, including Scottish May/Grand World Theodora's "Subway Theme", prototype barbers here weathed in a fog of dope and The Mohawks' "Champ", a 1968 classic asset stripped for its rhythmic chases by early HipHop. Things changed for ever in this time and place and the merging and melting still makes for gripping listening. This collection will make you rich. (DS)

Construction Site (Galene 2XCD) is a compilation/project funded by the Swiss Arts Council to herald the building of a rail link between the Gotthard and Lötschberg, connecting the north and south of the Alps. The perhaps inessential first CD consists of numerous, sometimes field recordings of work in process, the relation of cement mixers, the vibration of tools against metal, the whee of the drill, etc. The second CD features tracks commissioned from 13 artists, a number of them Swiss, plus an international cast including Fennesz and Egyptian Rasta, representing the various nationalities of those working on the construction site, a dedication which smacks of conceptualism for conceptualism's sake, but never mind. Their job it is to spin up music from the raw material of disc one.

Overall, the collection has a *Kafkaesque* clang about it — a sleek, synth-driven, untamed hymn of praise to the bang triumph of technology over formidable nature. Among the highlights are Yello man Boris Blank's "Lightsphere", one of his best efforts in years, capturing the awes of the tunnel, the remoteness of the drill, the blaze of light at the other end and the green, fog-bombing glow of the underpinning. Whereas Blank, as is his custom, most stresses the music, artists like Dorus, Jean, Quercus none is on the music details. Their "Night & Day & Night" could be an examination of the disruption to insect life caused by the excavation. On "Dirt", Berlin's *Museo* floats on a pulsing rhythm, the heart of the operation, while not so engrossed in their trespass as to block out the dank weep of the tunnel interior. On "n68", meanwhile, Fennesz works up a small, inconsequential drilling into a vast, gaily carous of what sounds like a fall-bow symphony struggling to escape from a cocoon of abstract, gory noise. (DS)

essence of serious white noise, down rock waxes, and some of the most inventive guitar playing the group have put to record.

Ex-Bath band player Joe Preston dropped in on last year's *White 1*, and reissues with an appearance—although fellow contributors Rex Riffe and Attila Csihar—on the three-track follow-up, *White 2*. Like all of Sun DJ's recordings, *White 2* effectively toys with ultimate low and frequencies that'll between dead-fleas violence and passages of beautifully composed, intimate ball-melodies. The opening track "Hell-DJ-WEEN" is torn apart by a shuddering distorted power chord that repeats continuously for several minutes until the listener becomes so intense that the sound begins to curl in on itself, creating a thick, subharmonic chime of scolding noise. Sunn DJ's distinctive way of using guitar to envelop the listener in textual pits of sound comes fully into play here—most remarkably on the album's second track, "bassline." Above an ordinary ramble of heavily delayed bass, the guitarist strums a delicately layered lattice of scarping staccato that eventually collapses into an otherworldly dovetailing of random astral notes and airy atmospherics.

SUSANNA & THE MAGICAL ORCHESTRA LISTS OF LIGHTS AND BUOYS RUNE (DIAPHRAGM/CD)

Young Norwegian singer Susanna Willems has only one member in her orchestra—she's called keyboardist Morten Qvernild. Both are based in Kongsberg, a small town west of Oslo best known for its five thriving jazz festival. The couple's songs, loosely threaded soundscapes are created using a minimal set-up of keyboard, harmonium and autoharp, which provide a vibrant range of textures for Willems's elegant, wandering vocals to coil around.

The introductory two tracks on their debut album, *Lists Of Lights And Buoys*, are the focus. The first, an intriguing rendition of Leonard Bernstein's "1, 2, 3, 4," opens with Willems's a cappella verse, occasionally countered by ethereal dashes of keyboard. Her style of singing—somewhat, mellifluous, sustained—so charmingly complements Bernstein's composition, and when the route breaks halfway through and the instrumentation kicks up a step, she gorgeously embraces the fuller sound as her voice plays up to the sparkling cascade of autoharp. When applied to a slowed down, skippy version of Dolly Parton's "Jolene," however, these enchanting qualities have a

tendency to bleed into coherence between, and the intimacy of the song somewhat lost. The following nine tracks are original arrangements and show the duo's flair for unusually structured music, which is made all the more distinctive due to the lightness of the instrumentation. Although Qvernild's freespun sparse webs of sound function mainly to create an atmospheric backdrop for Willems's vocals, they also provide a gentle rhythmic pulse that she can work against. After, her voice will dip prematurely to the bar, or linger freely and idiosyncratically into the middle of another before dropping in to conclude a line that would otherwise sound finished. This free-wheeling contrast, combined with the strength of Willems's vocals and her peculiar, dignified innovation, stems *Lists Of Lights And Buoys* away from predictability, making it a rewarding listen

The intertwining of idiosyncratic textures and timing gradually shapes an appealing atmosphere of music that alternately deepens and pales, allowing Willems to whip and tack her vocals around the sweet geometry of minor chords and the infrequent beat of a tempo.

CECIL TAYLOR & MAT MANERI ALGONQUIN BROGUT/CD

By Philip Clark

One of the oldest experiences I've had in a concert hall was witnessing Cecil Taylor and Tony Doby bounce the meagre attempts of the *Song Of A Can* All Stars to occupy an improviser's space. The occasion at London's Barbican Hall was billed as a Taylor "new work," and it started with the pianist encouraging the Bang On A Can people to communally sketch the sketches he'd given them on manuscript paper. Taylor knew this ritual would run through their club nights and he gleefully watched as they then stumbled like forlorn dogs on a polished floor without any idea of how to lower themselves into the unfolding dialogue between piano and percussion.

As Bill Shoemaker points out in his note to this new CD, Taylor dismissed composition as an "archaic's nightmare" during a 1987 interview in *The Wire*, and *Algonquin* is another example of an institution—in this case the Library of Congress—operating a can of cultural worms by commissioning a "new work" from Taylor. This 1999 assignment required a voluminous disc and Taylor again produced a delectable sheet of manuscript paper, the difference being that on this occasion a great improviser—violinist Mat Maneri—joined Taylor to squeeze the potential out of his squiggles and doodles.

If a Western notion of composition had meaning for Taylor then that performance would presumably have employed widely different structural ideas and melodic forms from his other work. Of course, it doesn't. In fact, the main distinction between this project and Taylor's standard groups is not a compositional choice, but a simple matter of focus. Recall that by Maneri's personal feel for melody and his unshakable melodic logic, the performance opens with a short burst of Taylor's poetry, which Maneri underpins with lines at once exceptionally beautiful and distressingly melancholy. A Taylor record hasn't seen such plain melodic speaking since the ensemble passages on the 1966 *album* of *Compost*, and Taylor jets into his customary exploratory bass ruminations with karp-like sounds from inside the piano.

Taylor's playing throughout the rest of the album is stirring, muscular and mischievous. But a single minute in said he wily responds to this odd-classical scenario with aplomb as he demonstrates that when they're implied, and when it seems Maneri is about to drop into a Western Waltz, Taylor does it all he can to ram on his 3/4 pattern with rhythmic hiccupps and thunderous clatters. Each man takes a brief solo piece and they then reunite for a final duo that spins nautically for 13 minutes.

TERROR AT THE OPERA SNAKE BIRD BLUE NO SPIN/CD

By Mark Barnes

Terror At The Opera might be guitarist and vocalist Gretchen Gonzalez, from Detroit af-

filiate rock quartet Shambler Party, and vocalist and accordionist Faith Gage, but some of the music on this record sounds like it could have been sung at a country fair a century ago. The two voices sang in unison for more than harmonies, which adds to the anguished feel. "Lovely Day" starts off with an enthusiastic nursery rhyme count-bass that finds the singer and accordionist marching the beats of the field and birds of the air.

After this sunny, gleaming start, the record gets more and more haunting. The studio suggests the two main instruments—augmented by occasional synth, rhythm box and percussion—an appealingly rough, warm sound. It feels like the two musicians are invoking the ghosts of long dead show-biz tunes, drinking songs and dark parables. "I knew with your blood on my hand/I didn't stand a chance," they sing on "Let's Pretend," a brief portrait into a sinister world populated with mythical creatures, and where the glass and the wine converse.

While "You're Home" sounds like a tribute to an unnamed meeting between The McGonigalls sisters and The Longshore Organist, "Black Dee Eee" recalls the sort of song Lou Reed gave Moe Tucker—or maybe a Phil Spector girl group, albeit with his Well of Sound replaced by accordion and saw, staccato guitar.

DAVID TOOP & MAX EASTLEY DOL CREATURE BIP/CD

AKIO SUZUKI & DAVID TOOP BREATH-TAKING CONFRONT/CD

By GUY BELL

David Toop's new book *Haunted Weather* contains a charming cartoon drawing by Akio Suzuki of his 2003 London concert with Toop: a pair of cats squat on the floor, playing for an audience of cats. The Suzuki plays a busy squawking a brass plate, producing multiphonic chords, rhythmic patterns and harsh metallic scats, while the Toop plays down a bone flute. Both musicians dress in futuristic instruments and associated sounds. Suzuki's answer to Suzuki's versatile plate involves plucking objects over a small microphone, generating mimetic tsunamis of feedback. Suzuki switches to a double reed pipe, while Toop's flutes give off low, owl-like howls, or whistle up pitches which vanish into the atmosphere of dog snuffles. Recorded live in the small space below Mark Watfield's Sound 323 record shop, this is intimate improvising which combines delicacy and a sense of play in fast Suzuki's performing never fails to remind his listeners that to play music is indeed to play—as well does he communicate his unrepentant delight in the sound of, say, stones rubbed together. The best passages are multilayered ensembles, where brass plate, reeds, flutes and feedback all sing along together.

Those like myself who are enthusiastic for Toop's flute and guitar playing, for Max Eastley's sound sculptures and for the aptly momentary of their 1994 release *Burned Dreams*, may find themselves bemused by *Dol Creature*. Here, Taylor has taken recordings of himself and Eastley, and archived, edited and processed them. These Eastley's gentle soundscapes are audible, but as Eastley is also credited with "weather" and "computer," who is doing what is anyone's guess. This is a dark, restless album,

full of muted, assemblage. It's as if we are trapped in the undergrowth of a garden where some tiny creature just out of sight is gasping its last breath—as a garden of delights designed by Hieronymus Bosch and David Lynch. This may well be music influenced by the wildlife and environmental recordings of Chris Watson and others, but there's a hyperreal, digital heartlessness about it that creates unease. The last few tracks open up a little, allowing a measure of calm, but not much. The warmth and expanse of *Burned Dreams* have been replaced by the desolate loneliness of a wintry desert.

PAU TORRES MY WRONG MOOD TESTING GROUND/CD

By Tony Harrington

A record of electronic-acoustic (as opposed to electroacoustic) music—acoustic that uses the ambient moods and oppressive atmospheres of

Spain. Pau Torres is a Spanish composer, and *My Wrong Mood* is his second release for the Barcelona-based Testing Ground label, following the 2002 *3rd CD, Songs For Nuts*. That record sits somewhere in a recent continuum of imported music that links Tom Rowland to David Shea via Olafur Arnalds. Here, the mood is set by the opening version of Dmitri Chostakov's "Sadness." Soporific Agut! Martinez plays Dmitri's leaning melodic lines straight, but Torres replaces the melodic tones with generated for the origin by David Torrence's own beats with the ambiguous, tonalities produced by sound seeping down through layers of digital processing. Many of the tracks contain what sound like recordings of banal human activity, but abstracted under the microscopic lens of noise mixing, and doled by thick layers of electronic synthesis. Someone prepares a meal, has a conversation, discusses a body, walks along a driveway, assembles a nail bomb. Or none of those things. The classic rock of domestic dread is amplified by the use of saxophone, guitar or trumpet to carry over the message, but hanging over the action is no real hint of how real.

For "Nouvelle Cuisine" and "Phion," Torres looks to the model that post-war Electronic Music provided the modernist composer, Stockhausen's *Study A*. For instance, suspending amorphous globs of synthetic sound in reverberant space, then turning them suddenly through oblique angles, like an Alexander Calder mobile caught in a rush of air. "The Anti-Song" is a jazz ballad out to ribbons by random noise bursts and disembodied dialogue, a sounds like an act from the first *Grand Jury* album. But everywhere the textures are so rich and dense and fitted I want to pass my hand over them, feel them rippling beneath my fingers, sensual and suggestive.

If Kathryn Bigelow were getting into filming the future-narrative noir of Philip K. Dick's *Flow My Tears, The Policeman Said*, she now has a soundtrack ready made and waiting.

TU M' POP INVOLVED [VERSION 3.0] JULI/CD

By Matt Fytche

Ever inventive and stylish in their modes of production, Northern Ireland's Falk label have moved on from their Invidious Object Series of

The Boomerang

New reissues: rated on the rebound



Shell seekers: Tortoise

It's eight years since **Tortoise's** second album, *Milions Now Living/Will Never Die* (Thrill Jockey CD), was *The Wire's* record of the year, and it is now being reassessed along with 1998's *TNT* (Thrill Jockey CD). Listening to these albums is still a rich pleasure, and they both lie on musical peaks of that decade. Right from the opening of the 21 minute suite "Dist" – those pulsing, crunchy sounds, the low bassline, date of guitar colour – the excitement is palpable. Then the drum kit starts to kick, beneath a swirl swollen with whistling noises and dark organ chords: it's music busting with potential, and in no genre or all, though soon to have the post-rock label slipped across it. *Dist* has always felt like a group whose drummers and bassists ruled – five, several members took a turn in the drum chair – and tunes tend to appear first on bass guitar. Motives blind from Steve Reich inspired matrices and vases. Delight also comes from the subtleties of the production and the care taken over the sound: a bass guitar can turn like a substation or clatter like a farm cart. Bold studio savvy goes hand in hand with intricate, disciplined instrumental play. At a point in time where machines and excess seemed to be taking over, this cool, human restraint was all the more welcome. The drumming on "The Last Land" is a case in point – not an inelegant or unnecessary note. This segues into the hymnic-like chords, "Along the Banks Of Rivers." Much of this album has a surreal melancholy, filtered through group playing skill with understatement.

TNT sparks by comparison, at 85 minutes to *Milions's* compact 43. Self-effacing guitarist Jeff Parker has now fully joined the group; bassists and transients are drafted in to broaden the palette, and Tortoise's social experimentation has grown in confidence. There's a gentle humour in the style switching, in the games with drum machines and disco synths. There's also glorious melody ("I Set My Fire To The Hilltop") and sensuous playing ("The Suspension Bridge At Iguaçu Falls"). No dull tracks, no errors of judgment – it's a classic.

The result of militant guitar classicists **Die Haut's** 1983 debut album, *Burner/The Ice* (4th Thing CD) helps to complete the picture of the storied artistic ferment of Berlin. It's also of interest to Nick Cave collectors, as he guests on four of the seven tracks, recorded by the otherwise instrumental combo in the volatile period before the collapse of *The Birthday Party* and the rise of *The Bad Seeds*. One tune, *Burner the Ice* – all distorted guitars, angry bass, stormy drumming – becomes lost in its own furious, chaotic noise instead of channeling into

something shapier and more intense. "Luck Love" is one of the few songs focused enough to electrically Cave howls and growls menacingly, chanting "We can't stop the monster" over music as harsh and abrasive that it sounds like it wants to cut itself open.

The reissue is handsomely packaged, with an elaborate 24-page booklet featuring a heavily detailed biography and many rare photographs. A limited edition with a bonus DVD shows live footage of *Die Haut* on tour with the Birthday Party in 1982. The footage is murky but tantalizing, and makes it easy to believe that this group was best experienced live. (VD)

Two reissues from **Einstürzende Neubauten** capture both ends of their working spectrum. *Kaputt Stinner: Early Recordings* (Mute CD) is the one that enraptures you in its metal grip, comprising cuts from 1980 to 1982. It's a reminder that a lot of the shock theatre of early Neubauten, the strange industrial machinery, the drilling through the floor of the ICA, while attention catching, served to distract from the deconstruction they were actually working. One more ruthless even than that of punk. As the anti-lyrics of "Für Den Untergang" and "On-Dub" illustrate, they were at once primitive and aware, rejecting the establishing presence of synth pop as well as the overcautious stonemasonry of rock, going back to a set of first principles of their own making. On "Thirty Arrows" with Lydia Lunch, the sound *Black Bagel* and on *schlamm* sounds (readings of a pre-rock '67 rock record), as in 1946, disaffected European youth had assembled a new post-war sound from the post-war detritus of buckled metal, wires and malfunctioning radios. The feeble but persistent pulse of "Designate Tite", meanwhile, reminds you that like *Throbbing Gristle*, Neubauten were propelled by a notion of weakness rather than of 'industrial strength'.

Tabsas Rava (Mute 2CDs) was first released in 1993. Berglund had always described Neubauten as a "pop group", maybe as a early one in the eye of the extremist listener, maybe also out of a deeper longing for wider attention. Here, the hunkies of early Neubauten mostly spent, they took stock and diversity. The results are more accomplished, less viscerally thrilling. "Toske like 'Zebulun'" are awfully strange, the porcelain Gods of "Blume" affecting but badly transmitted. Only with the 15 minute "Headreiner" do Neubauten go back to the old ways – searching, fragmented collage, punctuated by excruciating near-silences and homebuilt percussive/concussive devices. But it isn't enough to convince even the use of English vocals on *Black Rava* monthly replaces an untransmitted sense of Neubauten's incommunicability with an equally unwanted sense of naivety. The second

CD features alternative versions of "Blume" and various solo tracks, the best of which is "3 Thoughts", a meditation on male sexuality and violence over a tense, riot, rhythmic pattern. (VS)

The revolution of the best of **A Certain Ratio's** back catalogue continues with *Sister* (Seed Jazz CD). Although it first came out in January 1982 and followed on very quickly after their debut *Bo*, *Sister*... nonetheless feels like ACR in their late autumn, working in the long shadows of their previous achievements. Although their sound is increasingly tarnished and accept, there is still something unplaceable and emplaceable about ACR's morbid soul evasions here. Martha Tilton's fat vocals are vital in their inadequacy, a bloodless counterpoint to the fumes of fatback bass on "Wino Sills Water" and the anguished, apertion funk of "Day One", the standout tracks after this. Yet it wasn't so very long after that *A Certain Ratio* formed the entire point of *A Certain Ratio*, appearing more to weld the ranks of colourful jazz funk efficiency and consequently falling apart and away. Of the two bonus tracks, "Kether Hot Kisser" begins promisingly but darts into an adrenergic, senseless, mid-pace tour of the more and less notable features of their punk/funk anomaly. "Funusaku" is similarly diffuse but with its weak beats of brass emanating from just over the horizon, at least carries with it some of ACR's oblique amenity. (VS)

Soft Machine's live in Paris May 2nd, 1972 (Cuneiform 2CD), documents a short-lived line-up. *Edith Head*, Hugh Hopper, John Marshall and Mike Ratledge. This group's only studio release was side two of *Firm*. All the pieces played here, part of a "Pop Week" at the legendary Paris Olympia, come from *Firm* and *Firm*. There's a moving dance thing going on with the Softs at this point. Marshall is on his way in and Dean is on his way out, freed by the abrupt departure of drummer Phil Howard. Maybe this contributes to a slightly yipsy, untethered feel to the evening. Dean's attempt to steer the outfit into the valley of free blowing has triggered an unresisted crisis as to what the group is for. Dean's scalding on "Pier Tilt" and "Old White" is nasal and stentorian. On Ratledge's "Drop" Dean contributes fully electric piano behind Ratledge's jazz organ soaking – at least it would be heard, if mixed better – but the piano has one detuned burn note, and it's a relief when Dean finally picks up his alto sax for Hopper's "M". Group interaction sparks into life here and there, but the musician who comes over best is drummer Marshall, who plays with hungry energy and at least sounds like he's enjoying himself. The scampy melody of "Out-Bloody-Redgous" is probably a good one, as Marshall locks into Hopper's bass and varies his colours well. The sound of the live recording is clear, if not

stereoscopic, and the drums sound great.

However, a comparison with some of the same pieces recorded by the BBC two years earlier with Robert Wyatt on drums, shows Dean trying harder and sounding happier. In 1970 Soft Machine could never have been accused of being a jazz group. (SR)

In the early 60s, British alt scapologist **Trevor Watts** met John Stevens and Paul Butterfield and formed what was to become *Spontaneous Music Ensemble*, and later *Amalgam*. Though Watts never acknowledged the description, it seems innocent enough to describe the latter 70s group as "jazz rock". *Amalgam's* most significant period group was between 1980 and 1979, when it featured Keith Rowe (guitar), Colin McKenzie (bass guitar) and Lem Gorenfeld (drums). Rowe is absent from 1977's *Savannah* (FMR CD), which has McKenzie, Gorenfeld and member Dave Cole on guitar and Pete Cowling on bass guitar. Even more than Miles Davis's landmark *fusion albums* – which provided a term for Bill Leavelle – the low end is attenuated. But still the results seem dated. The highlight is a haunting mid-tempo interlude on "Mass". (RW)

Finish composer **Kajia Saarialho** has always been strongly influenced by natural phenomena, perhaps most famously the Aurora Borealis in her haunting *Lichtbogen*. A new compilation brings together two halves of her majestic orchestral *dyksh Du Cristal* and *A-Lune* (Ordis CD) from 1982 and 1990, inspired by Hans Jónsson's text, is a sonic examination of two radically different physical states, the orderly crystalline structure of the opening ensemble as against the more fugitive and evanescent qualities of the solo parts (alto and cello, both possessed) in the latter. The Los Angeles Philharmonic under Esa-Pekka Salonen are magnificent and so are the two soloists, Teatut Pet Alanko and cellist Ansa Marttinen. Cello has always been one of her favourite instruments and the latter work represented on the set. A Sept *Amalgam* with Kurtjens under a sequence of ephemeral 'batteries' written immediately after Saarialho's opera *L'Amour De Loin* and the perfect counterbalance to its long periods. The final piece is probably the best known, but only because it was the impromptu of the Kinos Quartet. *Amalgam* is the first in Saarialho's *Jardin Secret* sequence, a virtuoso deployment of the most 'classical' of ensembles again using sound processing and an extraordinary range of techniques and dynamics. Not perhaps the Saarialho albums for beginners – you want something with *Lichtbogen* to start a wonderful set of the same. (BM) | Reviewed by Clive Bell, Geoff Dyer, Andy Hamilton, Brian Morton and David Stubbs

downloadable MP3s to the new Flame project—a numbered edition of burn-to-encode CDs (a teasing conjunction of the exclusive and the disposable) packaged in large jewel cases with the usual attractive minimalist design—in this case, the catalogue number is represented in data code in the bottom half of the cover.

The second release in the series features Tokio Rissana Polidoro and Emiliano Romanello as *tu mi*—the name is taken from a 1918 mixed-media work by Marcel Duchamp in which oil and pencil designs of a bicyclist wheelie with a bottle bush, and a slash in the canvas is held together with safety pins. A similar design in aesthetic disparities drives those short sonic vignettes, in which plucked and strummed acoustic guitar integrates with the quavering, bubbling maelstrom of digital sound, making it difficult to tell harmonic overtones and string rags apart from feedback and glitch.

The music isn't grown- or test-driven, but bubbles around subduing partial drives, looped and loosely assembled motifs, that interface with and invade the casual instrumental patterns. On "Something Sweet In The Coffee," a fingered guitar riff nopes out into odd ringing tones, and pulsating synth-toe textures with more than a nod to the hairy kaleidoscope ambience of John Martyn's Echoplex technique. Elsewhere an accordion swoons caught in unclear doodles of sound—flits and pocks which fold into the mix without displacing the organic flute tones. Later tracks develop a more reflexive and abrasive feel, culminating in the overblown and distorted drone of "Mazzo Forte." There are some mulling and rotating patterns of sound recalling Duchamp's Rotoreliefs, and yet *tu mi* use disparity for ingenious atmospherics rather than their shock.

MICHAEL WERTMÜLLER DIE ZEIT, EINE GEBRAUCHS-ANWEISUNG

BY BRIAN MARLEY

The first time I heard anything of Michael Wertmüller was 2002. On that occasion he was drumming up a storm on *Nothing*, a concert recording by one of Peter Dinklage's trio. In certain respects, *Die Zeit* could hardly be more different. The title piece is scored for chamber

ensemble plus Mark Taylor (computer) and frequent collaborator Stephen Witzler (guitar). *Die Zeit* was released in 2001 at the Donaueschingen Tage für Neue Musik. The full title translates as Time, A User's Manual, and at Donaueschingen the 15 instrumentalists read their parts from a screen on which the score was presented like a film. In terms of tempo, the parts operate independently and are, apparently, as complex as it is, almost impenetrable. The music itself is violently eruptive, and passages are fragmented by the computer and reconstructed in different ways. Much of it sounds like heavily amplified bluster.

The remaining pieces, for string quartet, comprise two movements of a three-part composition entitled *Entführung*. The theme of this piece is disorientation (out-of-bodyness, if you prefer), and it was influenced by one of Francis Bacon's typically violent tephroids. The first part is for the quartet alone, and on the third part Alex Basse adds live electronics. Once again, the music is so unforgivingly complex that the players struggle through each piece, and the overpowering use of electronics makes any subtlety that may exist in Wertmüller's string writing. To cap it all, the unsympathetic recording of both *Die Zeit* and *Entführung* does no one any favors.

WILCO A GHOST IS BORN

BY DAVID STUBBS

2003's *Yonkers Hotel* at *Radio* was instantly rejected by Wilco's overlords at *Alt*/Time Warner, who wanted to release it on the grounds that it was a "career error." It eventually emerged via *ADIs* as more leftfield outcast *Nonesuch*. That album exhibited strong hints of an avant-garde sensibility, not least thanks to producer Jim O'Rourke, who so agitated the major label bean counters. Great as it was, however, there was times when its improbable elements of electronic feel sounded out like Wilco's ostensibly alt Country sound, rather than fully integrated within it.

With *A Ghost Is Born*, however, Jeff Tweedy's group have evolved still further. Argan, Jim O'Rourke co-produces, as well as playing a

discrete role within the group. It's not that Wilco have abandoned rock in favor of the abstract, although on an 18-minute excursion in particular here, you'd be forgiven for thinking they had. Rather, as the title states, a ghost is indeed born here—the ghost of American rock 'n' roll itself. Although the flavors and intimations of US rock are discernible in the grain of the sound—baroque pianos, cowboy guitar, staccato, *Am Bron* on the breath—such elements are illusory, physically laid, withheld. Musically and lyrically *A Ghost Is Born* is translucent, weightless, superstitious, capable of drifting back and forth across rock 'n' roll's state lines at will.

"His goal in life was to be an echo," sings Tweedy on "Hummingbird," and the album is full of echoes. On opener "At Least That's What You Said," Tweedy's baritone love song is at odds with the preternatural baritone of his guitar, whose unceremonious tenor is reminiscent of Neil Young's late songs with Crazy Horse, babbling like a psychotic stage dummy independent of its master.

The extensible alt Country musicianship of "Hell Is Chrome" is again subtly belied by the supurbulous traits it leaves in its wake, and a lyric in which Tweedy meekly makes a curious pact with a "chrome" Satan, is this a comment on the debilities in the lives of artists, or the temptations and blandishments of corporate rock?

"Wishful Thinking" arises into being from a difficult guitar concerto birth before taking relatively conventional shapes, while "Two-Legs," although its barbed and mystical lyrics evade the album's title, is a deceptively evocative fragment of futurism. It hardly prepares you for the album's two most radical and ranging outings. The 13-minute "Spades (Kodomo)" is a motoric, pastiche venture down the extended stretch of rock 'n' roll freeway that Knutskut built, punctuated with violent, transmuted bursts of guitar spray courtesy of Tweedy. It's where Wilco feel least "ghostly," ironically most fully and physically themselves, going where they want to go. The 15-minute "Last Than You Think," meanwhile, features the most conspicuous input from O'Rourke, leading the group in a coalition of loops, filters and synths. Ervically without rock feel or bone, it's an unsettlingly steady accretion of drones,

ablated chords and what could be postreggae recordings—like being slowly consumed by the anxiety and ominous stillness of the night. It's not the most extreme or unpeopled such sonic excursion but in the context of this album, it's both besting and telling.

YULDUZ BILMADIM 30 HERIZ CD

BY NICK SCOUTING

Yulduz Uzunova is a Central Asian pop sensation with album sales in the millions. The updated take on Uzbekistan folk songs that brought her this success also caught the attention of Josh Weller, who, suitably encouraged, has both produced this album and released it on his own 3D Heriz label. Uzbekistan has a proud folk music tradition developed among the horse herding communities, not to mention a distinct vein of local shamanism. As a graduate of the Diferential Music Conservatorium in the capital Tashkent, Yulduz can sink these traditional forms with a graceful ease and facility.

Josh Weller's trademark bass playing is complemented by the guitar of reggae session stalwart Ernest Ranglin. The combination is compelling in its own right and provides a loosely textured, like-minded context for Yulduz's vocals, almost all performed in her native language. Opener "Dry Kurb" ("Wait For The Moon") is typical: traditional drone instruments are joined by Weller's subterranean shuffle, while Yulduz alternates between linearly passages of quiet longing and flights of passion-filled vibrancy. Weller and Ranglin's clear pleasure at playing together is most on evidence on "Bilmadim Dab," while "Ketragai Dab" also shreds out.

Weller's hope was to liberate Yulduz from probably unappreciated Western production efforts. This he has admirably achieved through his use of reggae influences. The exception is "Kes Ma," the only English language track on the album. This combines a nursery rhyme melody with a lyric that proclaims "I may not speak English, but I know my rights," which is sung with a raw determination that becomes quickly obvious. Clearly defined to be a single, even remixed by Bill Laswell and Philip Verga can't escape the appeal of the song beyond that of kitsch cover. □

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fourcolor, Andrew Deutsch, Alfaburo, Ito,
BioRanch, Sawako, Utah Kawasaki

Brief History

Founded in 1999 by Yasufumi Suzuki, Indination and Monism in Tokyo. In 2000 Hiroko Kawagoe (aka koguma) joined the crew. Indination and Monism left in 2001. As a drama student in

my early teens, I visited Europe. In Bulgaria, I joined a spontaneous party. The DJ equipment was only a Walkman and cassette recorder, but the atmosphere was really comfortable and I was moved by the people's positive response. Back to Tokyo, I started an event to enjoy music with my friends. We handled old CD-Rs and tapes of our music. It was the start of Commune disc. Since then we have built up a large catalogue and hosted bar/gallery events such as Go Love and Emphasized.

Statement of intent

Musical tastes: experimental electronics, electroacoustic to unclassified tones, structured, (non-structured or improvised/non-improvised). Missing the best use of the "backbeat" of CD-R. Commune releases works which condense musical phenomena and accidental sound around as in our daily life

Compared to CDs, CD-Rs can get to listeners faster, because it takes less time to become a "product." UMI is a sub-label focusing on the 20 minutes of 3" CDs. By putting time restrictions on artists, I'd like them to rethink time. It is an experiment with restriction.

Future plans

Reorganizing compilation, Mosaic's Ayame minimal guitar. Nantagene (ex-BuRush) solo, project, who plays close attention to the extra process involved in the simple work of playing CDs on the CD-i. Plus new electronic artist playing click and Mouthhouse

Choose cuts

Tenzy Ayame: Proletarian Blues CD-R
Am Cut 3" CD

Info & manifesto: Yasufumi Suzuki

Avant Rock

Reviewed by Nick Southgate

CINÉLUX PARDON MY FRENCH PRESENTS CINÉLUX PITCH BENDING CD

Pardon My French is designed to introduce French acts to a wider audience, combining original recordings with remixes to provide original Cinélux are a trio, Laurent Philippe (aka Louché), David, while Christian Baguelin (aka Stummen) and Yann Lussier (aka Testecorde) split between bass, guitar and keyboards in trademark post-rock fashion. The Cinélux twist, as the paradoxical title, comes from their compulsive reference invention, sampling their own playing to produce their own breakbeats and backbeats. Their five self-produced tracks are consequently more richly textured than others' remote and tend towards a space and like post-rock akin to Friggs. The remixes run over the five musicians' instincts in favor of pure beat: for example Macchodrum's reworking of "Hollis" sheds the original's quietly slewing rhythmic structure, while Cinélux crafts their own samples. Remixes from Capital K.Rip, Mitchell "Swollenhead" Akiyama, Tonia and Jean complete this introductory survey.

THE EXCITING TRIO IN CHICAGO THERE IS WILLY (DOCUMENT CHICAGO #6) 402 MUSIC CD

The Document Chicago Series was started by 402 Music to capture the new music emerging from the ever greater jazz consciousness of Chicago's well-established free jazz scene and non-jazz players. The Exciting Trio comprises drummer Dave Pawlow (of the Italo Axi) line, bassist Griffin Rodriguez (Babylon, HM) and guitarist Matt Schreder. There's great artistry and sophisticated between the players on the engaging shuffle of a track like "It's a Place", or the cool selection of "Scamun", where Schreder uses various rock guitar tricks with volume and tone to extend his otherwise traditional jazz playing. Electronics and melodic are employed on "Grippe On Ice Come", the track on which of post-rock that have run through Chicago's music scene so freely in the last decade. Given the players' other interests, much of In Chicago There Is Willy is surprisingly restrained jazz playing, although when the ensemble do experiment the results are never less than intriguing.

DOUG HILSINGER WITH CAROLEEN BEATTY TAKING TIGER MOUNTAIN BY STRATEGY DEK WORKS CD

Imitation being the sincerest form of flattery, one should not be surprised to find Ben Eno verging on the sentimental in his slowest-to-be this byte-by-byte and track-by-track remake of his 1974 album. I don't often listen to my own work, but this time I finished, but leaving this one as though through someone else's ears and mind had a powerful effect on me. I thought "Wow wow!" How touching! How sympathetically

done! And actually... they aren't bad songs after all! Eno's assessment is partly accurate. Hilsinger and Beatty's loss of the original album is a pity. It is like hearing a passionate believer profess their every article of faith with such wide-eyed conviction that you're obliged to reconsider the desire predominate. The production is a self-confessed recreation, but the desire to have made the original, not to improve on it, it is a double success, being both an act of love and renewing your interest in your own old recordings.

BILL HORIST LYRIC/SUITE ACUTRACKS CD

Lyric/Suite is a collection of tracks originally designed to accompany a dance piece conceived by choreographer David Mark from Jan Zwick's work. Lyric/Suite, itself an exploration of the non-rational processes involved in artistic creation. Such a collaboration is familiar territory for Seattle-based Horist, whose previous Pure Ubu-inspired group Phineas Gage employed elements of vaudeville and circus performance in their stage act. Alone, Horist falls back on his solidly extended guitar technique to produce a collection of abstract songs and essays. Despite being composed and performed by guitar, guitar, a piece like "Season", with its clapping electronic cut-outs and sweeping bowed passages has the impact of a far larger ensemble. Elsewhere, there are gentle swirls of grandeur and somber repose ("Winter"), sithering, mid-Western slide ("Cadenza") and minimalist percussive glitch ("Nil By Hand").

THURSTON MOORE/ MY CAT IS AN ALIEN FROM THE EARTH TO THE SPORES VOL 1 OWNL CD

This is the first in a projected series of split LPs from Opax, a label run by My Cat Is An Alien's paternal co-composers Nazario and Roberto Opax. Each release in the series will be an exceptionally limited edition vinyl LP featuring "hand printed sleeve art on a wood support." Via various tour support slots, the brothers have leveraged their status as Sonic Youth's chosen representatives in Italy to persuade Thurston Moore to contribute to this first volume, guaranteeing an instantly strident album. Sonic Youth's complicity for the 100 copies pressed up, Moore's piano, entitled "American Coffin", is an unapologetic and lengthy assault on the higher register of a piano that segues into a brooding drawn found sound collage. My Cat Is An Alien make full use of their side of the LP with "Brilliance In The Outer Space", chirping space rock ambience infusing with the Technicolor quality of a glacial special effect in a low-budget sci-fi movie.

THE NEW YEAR THE END IS NEAR TODAY CD

Those who lament the passing of slowcore poster child Bechard will delight at the return of

brothers Matt and Bubba Kadane with their second album under the epochal and millennial banner of The New Year. Their past has been coded here by larger and grander desire hangs in the air as part modes of disappointment catch the sunshine's last flinching glow. These are songs about lost opportunities and second starts, for example the self-explanatory "Plan B" that opines, "This ain't breaking my back, just my spirit". The pessimism doesn't lift in other tracks, such as the black "Sinking Ship", the bleaker "Dissee" or the self-justifying "Stranger To Kindness", but finds its perfect voice in the chords that walk with delicately hunched shoulders through each song, their gestures flapping behind and faces lined in colors to like the tears prickling the corners of their eyes. The Kadanes have created a collection of songs of which they can be proud, although it seems unlikely that will make them very happy.

PAIK SATIN BLACK STRANGE ATTRACKS CD

The fourth album from Detroit-based power trio Paik, Satin Black unfolds over five instrumental tracks that progress with the relentless energy and transcendent intimacy of a psychotic flow. By turns tonally crystalline and granular, there is too much of the Detroit afterglow in the for it to be space rock. Yet despite Satin Black's dark heart pumping with the Motor City's infamous bad boys of past years, it is accompanied by a cerebral questing for greater thoughts and greater things. "Dirt For Driver" leans with unflinching righteousness, the title track broods and swallows back its inarticulate desire for just reward, while "Dirty Saint" slowly roils with the compressed intensity of innocence cruelly betrayed. Outside the incantation of rock's minimal musical unit is belated in a psychodic: lightning, a perfect metaphor for a music caught somewhere between the mud and the stars.

THE PAPER CHASE GOD BLESS YOUR BLACK HEART KILL ROCK STARS CD

The Paper Chase's John Congleton has taken the songwriter's genetic presumption that everyone has had their heart broken, and he has built a bitter and wonderful musical world from it. Against a malnourished multi-generational tradition of barroom blues, Congleton's incoherent-drenched vocals wear between the merely nascent and the outright howling. Songs like "One Day He Went Out For Milk And Never Came Home", "You're Going To Get It", "Let's Be Bad Henry, Let's Be Really Bad" and most transparently "Abby, You're Going To Burn For What You've Done To Me" come from a place where the milk of human kindness curdled into a state of rancid putrefaction some time back. Visions of the disintegration of the human condition will be able to gorge on visions trilled to their black hair's roots. Listeners of a gentler disposition, however, should approach The Paper Chase with extreme caution.

PHAROS OVERLORD THE BATTLE OF THE AXE/HAMMER (LIVE) LAST VISIBLE DOGS CD

Pharos Overlord are Finnish folk of live folk but considerable attitude. Originally recorded live in Helsinki in 2001, this is a side project for Orla's Jussi Lehtinen, now finding wider distribution with a licensing deal (although inexplicably losing a track from the original CD release). The five instrumentals are wondrously monolithic fudges through the countless tundra of a collective (re)imagines of Pharo's Overlord's brooding, brutal minds. As tries such as "Mountain" and "Skyline" suggest, this is a musical endeavour of uncompromising scale, scorching fine detail and monumental in its statements. The horrificating recalls Loop or a pagan marriage of the Aesthetes brothers and early Can. The unyieldingly redemptive approach finds its zenith, or perhaps nadir, on "Mystery Shopper".

SKILL 7 STAMINA 12 ROBOTICS WITH STRINGS JUNIOR ASPHIN CD

Like all great art-punk groups, not one of the members of Skill 7 Stamina 12 looks like they belong in a group. They look like IT technicians, book room full servants, or secret workers. While the post-punk revival rages, rampant with the naive howl of misplaced nostalgia, Skill 7 Stamina 12 are all the more valuable, the restrained intensity on display here creates a sense but open musical texture, particularly between Ashley Warlow's insistent, cerebral percussion and Nathaniel Mellick's jazz-punk bass playing, over which Dan Fox states clean cutting guitar figures. Mellick Schoen's tendency to revert to her native Ostin in her thinly plaintive and maimed wounding complicity this early 80s group, strong to meet, Robotics With Strings is intelligent and accomplished enough to find its own voice beyond the pastiche peddled in post-punk's name elsewhere.

VARIOUS SLEEP TIGHT... UNDER A BLANKET OF PSYCH (NO 2) EASY SARCULATURE CD

This extremely limited handmade compilation affords six opportunities for lo-fi psych fans and five folk acolytes alike to sleep very lightly and very soundly indeed. The opening track "Nagasa No (Sams)" from Fuzuma, a Philadelphia-based free folk trio headed by Tom Bark, flows in the same vein as Damon & Naomi, building its acoustic swell to an indeluctably overwhelming and paradoxically muted climax. Similar fare is on offer from Japanese trio Phaeon Nijo who whose "Wind And Anger" is dominated by Takashi Nakazaki's violin, capturing a Velvet Underground inspired mood. Japanese duo Hishago and Philadelphia duo Planet & Beetha each contribute blizzard guitar raves. Hishago honour the overworlds' wall of sound method, while Planet & Beetha build their diaries from gently churning and endlessly gradually unfolding guitar apogees. □

Critical Beats

Reviewed by Philip Sherburne

AKUFEN FABRIC 17

For anyone who didn't make it to MUTTER this year, Akufen's mix for London's Fabric club offers a wealth of evidence that Mortal has become one of the world capitals of Techno included in the 21 track mix are cuts from Caschius, Mossa, Steve Beaupré and a certain Mortal's resident, Jeff Milligan, as well as Mike Shannon's remix of "Samese Twins" by Honor Inc., an alias of Akufen (Marc LeClair) himself. These tracks bar an not wotven from similarly minimal form from Matthew Dear, Klok, Parityto, Cabanne, Utkarist, et al. Akufen's selection sums up the dialogues that link Cologne, Berlin, Jena, Paris, Montreal and Santiago as they toss about minimal Techno's post-hip-hop aesthetic form like some paper scraps, adding a fold here, flattening a crease there. It's simply but ably mood, favouring sparse, skipping beats that cavalcade clearly. The only transition that doesn't work is from the punctuated blisses of the Rap-Dit Artists' "Little T1/8" Jock into Sister Concero's "Smoke On The Water" remake. Their beats and textures are just too distinct to beaver seamless blending, and it sounds more like a digital slide than the end of intimate cross-outting mix marks Akufen's live productions and DJ sets.

ARK ALLEGUYARK VOL. 4 CIRCUS COMPANY 12"

MOSSA YOU'RE LOOSING MY MIND CIRCUS COMPANY 12"

Paris's headquarters of click, Circus Company, fills out their catalogue with two strong new releases of punchy, clattering minimalist funk. Ark seems to have a burly treatment of his *Alleguyark* series, blending two new tracks of his signature funk and spin, "On A La-La" is anchored by Ark's staple, a resolutely four-to-the-floor bass bump, and embellished by vocal snippets and "Blink and you'll miss 'em" keyboard stabs, interrupted by cinematic strings and loose westered drum fills. "Moss" takes a more traditional French House approach, like filter disco run through a paper shredder: Fym and Cabanne round out the EP with a pair of remakes that are equal parts perk and perplex. Meanwhile, Mortal's Mossa, fresh from cutting a single for Mike Shannon's Cassette Unit, joins Circus Company from across the pond with a four track EP that dives from both the diving board peak of Shannon and the cross-steps of Akufen. A mukmuk, not in terms of sound quality but melodic development, keeps Mossa's tracks feeling like coded signals that can't quite figure out how to release their energy. But you can tell, as in the clucking vocal loops on "Down Home Funk" and "Braz1999," that they're staying up potential for the big bang.

BECKETT & TAYLOR/SPANDEX LIES HAND ON THE FLOW 12"

Just a few months after releasing the startling debut single on their Hand On The Flow imprint,

Lardo Beckett and Steve Taylor return with two new tracks plus two new HDIP signing. Spandex, Beckett and Taylor's "Lies" and its remix "Lies (Remix)" are the devil's detouring patterns of their debut, but where that mood imagined Chicago House in the shape of a sharecropper's lament torn by the rake's blades, the new tunes rarely any obvious relevance to that. A fairly melancholy vocalists holds centre stage in a seemingly empty theater, the backing sounds like it's been scooped from turning plates of folding chairs and an orchestra noisily clacking its instrument cases closed. Spandex plays it marginally straighter, but his two tracks, dropped with abandon and dotted with hair-trigger beats on the rocket, still push the case of House music to its limits edge, slipping off these pieces and letting them fall where they may. "Nausea The Body" is an attack on the corpus of pop music itself; barely recognizable bits of a Hall & Oates sample splatter about like the fatty remnants of Matto's spending room.

TROY GEARY TECHNICAL REMOTE VIEWER DISCORDANT BEATS 12"

Brooklyn's Broken Beats label is best known for classic, genre-bending releases, but on their latest 12" they Geary (aka DJ 5lp, a veteran of labels like Drop Base and Kandomani) provides a respite from the apocalyptic authentic with four tracks of sparse, unadorned Techno. In contrast to the software-centric design of most contemporary minimal Techno, Geary retains a tight, machine feel, letting unadorned drum units do the talking. This is the sound of gearboxes commencing in the hours before the rave has begun, left to their own devices in a cavernous hangar while the DJs and crew are off filling up on dinner. Reminders and bell tones ring out the weekenders, leaving New Code messages and trailing edge in their wake. The trio track is an echo soaked disco signal for tom tom and mouth bang, and it sounds more than a little like 70s Human League or British Electronic Foundation. It's interludes the alienation with chatting bells and a rhythm that sounds sourced from a falling dot-matrix printer. On the B side, however, "Third Stage" and "Survive" add handclaps and rigid funk, resulting in two alternately jacking tracks full of hypersyncopations and unexpected potshots.

GRANNYARK RESNUYARK ZORRA LAMSON 12"

Beginning in 2001 as a Monday night speakeasy in Berlin, Zora Lamson's listening and dancing sessions have featured the likes of Pole, David Mulinax and Safety Scissors. The first EP from the label — complete with one of the most carefully designed covers I've seen in ages — suggests this stylistic ease without exerting to lowest common denominator "electronic." Granny Ark is Michelle Irwin, field recorder and electronicist, and on her four tracks she lets her whisper-thin textures into softly chugging minimal Techno textures that send up rich planes of exhausted harmonics.

"Haze" surveys a freeway from high on a hill, rendering the landscape into streaks of colour and whooshes of elements in rolling contact. "Haze (Remix)" makes the signal far into the woods where woodpeckers and windmills recreate the scene. "Gashing" offers a rocky woodbridge bridge arching over Pole's wailing dub chasm. After all this delicacy it's only proper that Edger J. Pasadena would funk up the works on his "Gassy's Square Dance" remix, battering Irwin's brushed drums and bloops with overdriven bass guitar in a dread disco workout that sounds a bit like what Two Lane Swadlow were aiming to do on *From The Double Gone Chapel* — but better.

PHIL PARNELL DO YOUR LIVING IN THE NIGHT MANIES 12"

The title track of Phil Parnell's 2002 album *Do Your Living In The Night* appears here in an awoken form and also remixed by Beaka, Parnell's labelmate on Manies, and Matthew Herbert, in whose two Parnell has long played keyboards. Parnell's version dangles Lilian Bourte's spunky vocals just out of reach, whipping them to and fro across the stereo spectrum, and distracts the listener with little flashes of keyboards, drum organ pumping and slot machine splashes of percussion. He's quite the tease. In his "Rank Leisure Mix," Andy Books seems to be excruciating some kind of demons, though whether from the track, his machines, or his own head is unclear. Bourte's vocals are even stranger here, upbeated and stretched, and the drum machine takes on the stop-start quality of the dumb waiter in a haunted house, all whirring gears and eerie creaking. Herbert turns in two mixes, one "Light," one "Dark." The latter barrels along propelled by pulsating organs and tinkling piano fills. If the former looks towards light, Herbert's like a kind of reflex, snoring its leaves in anticipation of the day.

UNDO & VICKINOIS HAPPY MONDAY EP MACHIN CITY 12"

The second EP from Undo & Vickinois, proprietors of the Factory City label and residents of Barcelona's Loft club, counts the duo firmly in thrall to Schaffel, the lumbering, input-riddled form that emerged from Cologne and its Kompakt label. Kompakt may want to allow the genre free hype (although if you advise a compilation called *SchaffelFest/Schuffe* Event, you can really be an anti-hypster), but the two Schaffel tracks here show that the form continues to popularise itself. In Undo & Vickinois's hands, it's melancholy stuff, down by rough analogue basslines and dressed up in sentimental synthesizer melodies. Barcelona's DJs have always been 80s fans, and it shows here in the downbeat, Depeche Modish feel of "Happy Monday" and "The Sparrow" alike. A third out, "Welcome," is even more indebted to synth-pop (as is "Kissed"), with a spry, breezy bassline reminiscent of Heiko's "You're A Good Boy." With the falset of cooing drums and positive synthesizers heralding the moment

of the slowdown — a familiar moment, in a city that regularly weaves well past dawn.

VARIOUS DET UN.D.01 DETROIT UNDERGROUND 12"

VARIOUS DET UN.D.02 DETROIT UNDERGROUND 12"

Ambitious software makers, perhaps recognising how brands like Zildjian and Marshall integrated themselves into the iconography of rock music, are increasingly injecting their logos into the splattered paint designs of electronic music releases. Native Instruments are at the forefront of this marketing juggernaut. First with co-releases with Germany's Savant Records, and now via a series of 12"s from the Detroit Underground series. Rather than UR-styled militant Techno, the first two singles, sleeved in exploding vector designs, showcase the glitchyhouse sounds of code warriors like Richard Devine, Kero and Mode Selector. The common thread among all the artists featured here is a sussed that unravel, falls and constantly renews its filament. The palette consists of a thousand shades of white noise in dense, pressurised clusters. But all the artists involved approach their beat-blasting with more attention to form than was apparent in at-risk-critic EDM of recent years, so that the rhythmic signatures of Techno, electro and HipHop make themselves heard behind the storm of bytes — like grave-rubbings rendered pale by paint.

DANIEL WANG BERLIN SUNRISE GHOSTLY INTERNATIONAL 12"

ItaloDisco is back in vogue, leaving me in a nostalgic position once again. As a 33 year old native Oregonian, the genre was never a part of my musical education until artists like Meco Area and V-F popularised it as a Techno antecedent. Daniel Wang has been excavating ItaloDisco's analogic foundations for more than ten years, so I suppose I had no excuse. But while there's a pleasure from digging into the back catalogues of artists I've discovered through people like Morgan Geist or The Wire's Peter Shapiro, there's an altogether different kind of pleasure in a record like Wang's "Berlin Sunrise." Hails, for its historical glaze, always sounds somehow freighted — it's a sound of years trying and speaking, spluttering before strange new square waves. But Wang, while he mimics the firing apparatus and prohibiting squawks of his mentors, infuses them with a grace, an assuredness and a confidence that's somehow lacking in much original Italo. At times this works against Wang. After enough lazy repetitions, you long for something other than the laidback bass cycles of "Phat Odeon (Weir Acid Mix)." But there's a comfort there too, a languid pace that maintains itself no matter how many electrons some laser they wove through the breaks. The title track winks its arpeggios at counterpoint bassline so gracefully it could be a court performance. □

BUTCH CASSIDY SOUND SYSTEM

HEAR WHAT I SAY EP
TANDEM CD

Only encountered in this column on compilations to date, Butch Cassidy Sound System is Glasgow's Michael Hunter. Although the idea of a remix of Junior Spiller's classic Rasta confessional hymn "Fade Away" might not automatically trigger multiple fissions, this joint is pure warm pop joy from the one drop. Previously with outings under the unwise guise of 'Pablo' on the Good Looking and Guidance labels as well as his own Red Hook, this single prefaces the irascibly styled album debut *Butches Bros*.

As no other musicians are credited, one can only assume this is a one-man effort. If so this is in the twilight Onyx league of modern dub excellence and there can be no higher recommendation than that. A bestless version of the title track seems obvious only after hearing it, but the jittery beats of "Pablo Butch" have a more unfortunate feel of the increasingly oppressive new orthodoxy of wacky drum patterns.

MIKEY DREAD
AFRICAN THEM
HAKUUB CD

Chances are you will be familiar with parts of this album even though you may never have heard it, for the radio single and jingles that link the dubz and interludes have been shamelessly plundered by countless dance acts since before sampling began. Michael 'Mikey Dread' Campbell's bare nose on his revolutionary input from the time he was employed as a radio DJ by Jamaican Broadcasting Corporation to fill in the dead airtime after midnight. Little did the management know he would have the sheer neck to play reggae tunes back to back on his *Beat* at the Controls show by the time they realised what was going on. Campbell was an overnight musical phenomenon supported in his righteous mission by the cream of the island's producers and artists. It didn't stop him getting the sack, though. This is his second, and most celebrated album, released first in the UK with the radio links included in the mix by English connoisseur Dave Hendley taken individually here are three or four great tunes, but taken as one long celebratory segue this is one great reggae album and must rank high in the top ten 'must have' dub sets. Even more so for the bunch of contemporaneous dub acts included, among them the well dratted dub to Wally Buckler's "Raggauffin' Style", drenched in daisy Mikey went on to issue some fine sides on his own D.A.T.C. imprint and record some killer tunes for On-1 Sound, but this, this remarkable as last, is the one he will be remembered for.

GRIEVOUS ANGEL VS
NINE'S THE OBSERVER
BLOOD AND FIRE (TWIST UP
THE MIX)
REVUE MUSIC CD

Who cares whether the Grievous Angel actually snouts vinyl or whether the label designs on his old Shards, Fragments & Forms blog are solely worthy? Stylistically related to Ray Marf's Small Axe People in its unashamed approach to sources and their source, the Grievous Angel Sound System manages and matches the slim precedents of UK two-step/Gange/R&B/ whatever back into the deeper roots of Ninoy and Scratch's apocalyptic chant. The result is a terrible shower of blows to Babylon's head. There's a whole side full of such chemical experimentation to be found on his relocated spot at grievousangel.net

KING TUBBY
KING TUBBY IN FINE STYLE
TANDEM CD

Showcasing Tubby's collaborations with foundation producers Royce Edwards, Derrick Harriott, Vinton 'Yabby You' Jackson, Winston Riley, Keith Hudson, Bunny Lee, Augustus Pablo, Lee Perry and Winston 'Ninety Nine Observer' Holness, this double set can be kindly interpreted as an attempt at part one of the definitive box set to document the legacy of the great sound man.

Working from a small four-track home studio in the tough Westfriesham district of West Kingston, Tubby preferred jazz to reggae and found his to be engineering a session. Most of the tunes brought to him for mixing and dubbing he regarded as 'yab'. Not many of the end products are only just now being recognised as sonic revelations which would exercise a profound impact on the development of modern dance and other genres of contemporary music. The essential missing bits are of course Glen Brown, Carlton Patterson, Sugar Minott, Wayne Marley and Arlen Rowley (for whom Tubby provided his most considered and revolutionary work), plus the once largely ignored gap-period at Finitonez. Containing a mix of the well known and harder to find tracks, the set will appeal to both hardcore Tubbies and those prepared to find out that the extraordinary claims made on behalf of the Dubmaster are all true.

MANASSEH
DUB PLATE STYLE VOL 2
HAKUUB CD

A name comes for Manasseh, the exemplar of modern roots, after sharing last year's "Step Like Pepper" with The Equilibrium. And, to paraphrase a Prince Lincoln Thompson tune, it's dub the way it should be.

This set is more of a return to the classic vocal or instrumental flourish by its dub version, while its forerunner was peddled as a showcase for the variety styles within the producer's grasp. If proof were needed of Manasseh's clear superiority, then head straight for the acoustically based "Western World Version", a dub to Spooky T's "Paper Soldier" 12" that pages a jazz based persuasion beat with fast and dirty wail wet. Guests on this trip though Manasseh's well spun dubplate cuts are veteran Denny Red on the amplified mace pump "Don Seng", Earl 16 on the passionately fluent "Don City", and the up and long time coming Buster Culture, who's almost dubbed off the disc on "Challenging

Version", "Sooner Pt 2", meanwhile, is one of those necessarily driving tunes that can only exist in reggae, where the synth horns are in the sweetest tension with the urgency of the rhythm

OVERPROOF SOUND SYSTEM
NOTHING TO PROVE
DIFFERENT DRUMMER CD

This is the debut from Overproof Sounds, a Jah Gripsy and Station offshoot from Birmingham's G Corp, who with vocalists Ras MC Tweed and Jugga have been busy on a non-stop Euro conversion tour. Their first single, "Watch What You Put In" (a plea for quality controlled spill feeding), opens this set with a jump-up intent that's delivered in the remainder with a largely drum 'n' bass/dancehall accented selection. Kenyah Booth (son of the great reggae dancer Ken Booth) appears on "Live It Up Right". Ultimately a largely vocal reggae album demands a few great tunes, but even with the impassioned vocals and accomplished technique this is mostly flat, despite the Alpacas impression on "Get With It" and Cheddie Carl's late appearance on "The Herb". Top track turns out to be a polite version of Mad Professor's "Kunta Kinte", a tune of mysteriously vague provenance.

AUGUSTUS PABLO
THE DEFINITIVE AUGUSTUS
PABLO
ROCKERS CD

Despite being as highly recommended, this retrospective set suffers similarly to the Tubby set reviewed above. Any attempt to chronicle the work of Augustus Pablo in a compilation set wishing to claim definitive status would have to travel further than the once own Rockers label — at least picking in One One One and Herman Chin Loy producers. Also there is a balance and selection issue here. With the Rockers catalogue open for plunder, who are great vocals from Paul Blackman, Junior Delgado, The Hightones, Paul Balo and others as conspicuously missing? However, the awesome line-up of deeply spiritual and heartfelt tunes here melts all such omissions away. Direct from the Black Ark comes a rare outing for "Silver Satta", there's the booming crisp lumpy dub "New Style" and "Thunder Clap", the dearest cut to the rhythm better known as Dr Alimantoro's "Best Dressed Chicken in Town". These, plus the utopian album that is "Ras Menelik Hare", stand out here. Two hours and more of absolutely guaranteed bliss.

DJ SPOOKY VS TWILIGHT
CIRCUS DUB SOUND SYSTEM
RIDDIM CLASH
PLAY CD

Ryan Moore comes to Spooky's rescue and pulls him back from the dreadful abyss that was his dalliance with Scratch and Mad Professor in combination style, launching into the more deeply cultural excursion. A couple of harmless goodies open up the set before the serious business begins with the appearance of "Dust Storm On MC 7023", which has clearly gone missing from the soundtrack of the yet to be

made DJ version of Frank Herbert's *Dune*.

This track "Riddim Clash" — Heavyweight Style" opens with a lyrical lullaby fluttering into snazzy gemstones before busting into the listening pleasure underpinned from those early 80s 'lockstep' 12" monstrosities, of thundering percussion and stabbing snare that only lurches back into the foldage after a full four minutes. "These Animals" is vintage Super Ape Scratch material complete with wacky whistle and Reginald Doman "Wardley", "Interlude" serves a stealer gemstone before Marlon's style status heralds the entrance of "Duch Culivator".

Good to hear Spooky once again reaching the heights of his seminal "Galactic Pump" and Ryan Moore leading in brave new multiple directions

VARIOUS
HITEK BY METEOSOUND
METEOSOUND CD

A dub aesthetic always informs the decisions of the A&R department of Berlin's finest electronic label, although these are techno and HiPop styles present here also. Dabrye's moodily persistent signature keyboard on "Magic Eyes" is only broken by brief reggae-style MC interjections and an occasional keyboard twirl, while Kim Thrall's remix on "Corridor 8 Eyes" is clear contender for ultimate snig-gold tune of the year. As Bus, Metro and Thud introduce the most favoured Earl 16 to voice "Simple Way", and old friend The Rostman also guests with "My World Is Spinning", his startling single from last year featuring Horace Andy. There's an Apparat remix from Monolake and old time Tonal connections via Sun Electric. The Orb allow their "Green Ginger" to be sliced up in a Bus dub remix. A freestyle selection of future classics all mastered down by Stefan Berke

VARIOUS
SUCKER PUNCH: JAMAICAN
BOXING TRIBUTES
TANDEM CD

At last the 'tojan concept' team hits a paydirt one two. The links between reggae and the former sport of real kings have always proven strong, from experienced pathfinder Prince Buster's shout to Ali and Frazier on "Earthquake On Orange Street" through to Cornell Campbell's roughest outing, "Boxing", out for Joe Gibbs. The ring is real! As he strode out to face Mike Tyson, Lennox Lewis, Mike Telford and right the ring, while the UK's ex-World Middleweight champ Nigel Benn became a well known habitué of Daddy Kool's reggae empire in London's Salto. Even though there's no room in the ring for Bobby 'Kilpatrick' 'Counter Punch', this selection gets a unanimous decision for the inclusion of Jay Youth on Burning Spear's "Joe Frazier/Haystack" rhythm with "Big Fight". Superchampion Ali is represented by Charlie Ace, "Ninety Dimes Alpacas and Derrick Morgan, and the great Joe Louis by The Dynamites. The whole package is rounded off with notes from former underground world welterweight champion turned reggae anthropologist Lloyd "Raggauffin' Man" Manyan. □

Electronica

Reviewed by Chris Sharp

FRANK BRETSCHEIDER LOOPING 'H' (AND OTHER ASSORTED LOVE SONGS) 12K CD

An artist as prolific as Raster-Notion's Frank Bretschneider must have some kind of system in place for determining where to take new recordings. His never been content with just putting material out on his own label — the last decade or so has seen him delivering music to Mille Plateaux, Audio NL, Fallt and Bip Hap, as well as developing a budding relationship on the other side of the Atlantic with Taylor Dupacer's eminently beautiful 12K label, which released a previous Bretschneider solo outing, *Russet*, back in 2000.

The title of this latest collection suggests a music that combines delicate regard and emotional approachability and *Looping 'H'* delivers exactly that. The 12 tracks are woven seamlessly together to produce a subtle, endlessly modulating procession of silvery, seductive details. Occasionally, Bretschneider's glittering digital pulses flicker into something approaching rhythmic urgency — "Looping 'H'" has an almost Latin beat — but the sleepy, cluster-like drones of "Hodot Summer" and the sparse, cool textures of "Hazy Broadcast" are more representative. Overall, the effect is one of unobtrusive yet highly involving alchemy.

EZEKIEL HONIG PEOPLE PLACES AND THINGS SINGLE CELL MUSIC CD

Ezekiel Honig started out as a drum 'n' bass DJ in his native New York, and although, as with last year's *Technology Is Lonely*, the title of his second album reveals a sentimental touch of the old man's dew-eyed inclusiveness, his music has clearly moved on. Opener "Pissing Through" is as an ecstatic waltz, its soft 4/4 horns "pissing" it towards the wide open dreamscapes conjured up by the likes of Mike Ink and Marcus Ginter. However, any epic aspirations are held neatly in check — widespread though the music is, it retains an stringent sparseness.

Later, tracks like "More Human Than Human" and "Winter Spring" pulse with airy poise, and by their occasional percussive excursions glance back towards Honig's breakbeat roots, the overall effect is one of warm, spacious stasis only infrequently disrupted by surprising sonic events like the hard-grooved percussion in "Green Tea". Although *People Places And Things* is by and large an underconstraining record, it's also a beguiling one.

LULLATONE LITTLE SONGS ABOUT RAINDROPS POP CD

The Tokyo-based label Pop specialises in releases that major on winsome, almost neoclassical tunefulness, and although Lullatone is not new to the roster, he clearly fits right in. Shown James Seymour, an American based in Nagoya, has released two previous albums as Lullatone (*Computer Recital* on Audio

Drugs and My Petr Melodes on Chidiso label) and both were notable for their ability to blend sweetly complex compositions from that simplest of sonic sources, the keyboard. For his third release, Lullatone has widened his sound palette, but his methodology is largely unaltered. Rather than relying on the naive tones of the analogue, he explores instead the naive tones of toy instruments, combining the ready, quavering chimes of glockenspiels and miniature pianos into fragile, pocketlike networks of melody. Lullatone clearly intends to coo an air of childlike wonder and for the most part he's richly successful, particularly when joined by slightly richer timbres of ukulele (on "Leaves Falling") and viola ("Riddles On The Playground"), but the sustained need of diffident innocence does become slightly cloying.

MONDOMARC SAU RA KLANGKING CD

Mondomarc is Marc Doffender's Victoria Savas, born in Spain but resident in Berlin since the late 1980s. This is his first album, but it feels like a continuation of his work with the group Mondo Fumare, whose deglo, cheerily dance and periodically inspired music flung anything CD could lay its hands on into a sampler and resampled the parts with haphazard charm. It's not entirely clear why this is a solo project, as Mondo Fumare's other principal member Gwendolyn also contributes vocals here, and the serendipitous mood is much the same. This genre, widely various music is unlikely to appeal to Mille Plateaux or Mega fans, as a track like "Pabateria", with its disco propulsion, ebullient bottleneck guitar and distorted vocals quickly demonstrates.

However, in its slightly arid way, much of *Sau Ra* is as idling as anything assembled by electronicists of more minimal, austere proclivities. "Resistencia", for example, occupies shadowy ground somewhere between Dirty Mind and Prince and contemporary two-step, and still manages to throw a harmonic pat into the mix. Elsewhere, the welcome presence of guest rapper Ladyboy on a couple of tracks neatly highlights some surprisingly assured rhythm programming. As long as you can forgive the occasional fits in the direction of Alabama 3, *Sau Ra* is an appealing collection.

MOON DREAM FENCING PLATFORM CD

The Leeds-based Fencing Platform are offering a welcome gateway to the French 'net audio' CD-R underground (their phrase, not mine) thanks to an ongoing link with their counterparts at Burning Embersness above the channel, which just happens to be run by Moon. Dream is thus their first UK release — as is much as 'release' is the right word for the admirable FF limited-edition CD-R ethic — and it's a veritable kaleidoscope of swirling analogue synth textures and heavily treated guitar drones. As titles like "Odyssey" and "There's Little Evidence Of Intelligent Lifeforms On Planet Earth" suggest, it's

unabashedly spacey stuff — but not undressed by touches of deep musicianship (like the jagged, cross-grained slashes of guitar that slice through "The Quaker Drive") or the swelling, buoyant strains of "Spacebridge". Listeners with a taste for the minimal will find the endless Berlin burbles of the more languid tracks like "One Two Three Venice" absolutely infuriating; but those of a more, uh, relaxed cast of mind will get back with a contented smile to enjoy the trip.

PUPPYHERTZ ANIMAL SQUAD MC/MINORAL CD

More fideismic HipHop for the attention deficit disorder generation — but unlike much of the collage samples used on these, which map out a deranged denigration and a grotesque barrage of factured information, Animal Squad is assembled with smoothness, very humour and plenty of second-sound charm. It's the debut release from the Toronto-based producer Scott Cems, a man who has clearly spent plenty of time scouring their stores for source material. Refreshingly, however, his printed snippets are neatly recontextualised rather than simply deployed for maximum decay impact. The sensation of genuine intimacy is heightened by Cems's assured boom playing which brings warm, spreading life to a track like "Wiggles", molting the disparate shards of sound into a convincing whole. Elsewhere, there's plenty of sonic shapeliness. "Cookies, Tea" combines a sunny, lion-like electronic melody with shimmering static, 50s radio announcements and scratches of gospel angel, while "Gelo Papi" opens with a heretic succession of scratched fragments before settling down to a lurching procession of B-boy beats wedged to beatific drones and shimmering vintage keyboards. The regular flowing incursions of "Home Time and Site Visit" at the expense of Pharoahe Monson and Alice Coltrane, too. In all, this is a genuinely promising first record, and Cems could well be one to watch.

MARTIN SIEWERT NO NEED TO BE LONESOME MOSE CD

The second release on the fledgling, Mega-affiliated More label is the first solo record by the Vienna-based Martin Siewert, who continues a career as a sound designer for theatre, film and installation pieces with membership of Traust (with Jockey) and Eber (Chapman). Slightly surprisingly, given Siewert's preoccupation with extensively treated guitars and the emphasis on abstraction, improvisation and texture, which characterises the other projects he's involved with, *No Need To Be Lonesome* is actually a highly approachable record. Here, he's felt free to explore an interest in groove and melody that has lain largely dormant so far. He does so with a certain amount of deliberation, however — the five songs that make up the album take up a full hour of listening time, and the mammoth, central 186 track weighs in at no less than 18 minutes 45 seconds. Still, it is an absolute beauty, fully justifying its dimensions, opening with

harmonically dense, gloriously overworn, sumptuous analogue chords before subsiding to soft strains and gradually working, through endless swirls of emphasis and instrumentation, back up towards that initial ambient reference. No doubt any passing melodic resemblance to Animals-on-Road sits in my imagination rather than Siewert's.

SINIAALTO TALLENTOUMIA FF SOCIETY CD

There aren't too many people who would argue that that there is an alarming lack of fangerine Dream records, but those of them seem to have come together in Helsinki with the intention of setting right just such a perceived shortage. Siniaalto was founded in 2002 by Ali Rana, Ikeru Hollinainen and Toomas Mettinen and on the evidence of *Talentoimia*, their second album, they combine a profound interest in the analogue synthelayers of the mid-70s with an equally profound affection for the instrumental Pop of the same era. The album consists of six strong out space-ambient explorations, recorded, in the best Pop tradition, live in Finland between May 2003 and January 2004. Varying in length from a mere ten minutes to as altogether more fully formed 10, these pieces are actually a real joy, despite their unusually raw exposure, their cosmic tendril's unflinching with exactly the right balance of portentousness, spacey sleaze and stored abandon.

ULTRA MILKMAIDS POP PRESSING ANT ZEN CD

French brothers Yann and Rodolphe Jaffar have been exploring their musical influences as Ultra Milkmaids for the best of the last ten years. They started out as a punk-funk trio, then a comedy company with a third brother, Gaudier, but after encountering early post-rock and industrial recordings by the likes of Moogbass and Coil, they modified their own approach to reflect these new sources of inspiration. The comprehensive links page of their Website indicates that they remain active, queuing listeners, and the assumed, playful and distinctive contents of *Pap Pressing* believably confirms the suspicion, moving from fractured, digitally processed and suggestive fragments to more fully formed, organic pieces of music with easy assurance. Despite being burdened with an incomprehensible if not downright ridiculous title, "My Electric Ladyland (act) is a magical, light-filled exhalation of sound encompassing sustained harmonies and teeming environmental snippets in its gentle ascent. Just as badly named, "Pop Star" emerges from a haze of mums hum, biling shape as a dappled, spectral shore reminiscent of early Labradford. "My Physical TV System" admits the mistake pulse of conventional percussion for the first time and resolves gently around soft hum in all. *Pap Pressing* is a convincing collection of effort mannae that demonstrates that persistence and purity of motivation can pay off in the end. □

HipHop

Reviewed by Dave Tompkins

BEANS NOW SOON SOMEDAY

Beans was always the most ferociously unimpressed of Any-Pop Corporation's MCs. The Afro-futurist mindset in which APC were steeped might have found its most ardent advocate in Beans, but he was always the member most resistant to the underground elitism that kept APC a leftfield proposition. It's clear that this man wants more than backslaps from the backslapping brigade. From the neck up Beans looks like Isaac Hayes, from the neck down he looks like a skinny nerd on his way home from an IDM convention.

On *Now Soon Someday* his manes both sides of himself, the Rumburgen performer and the introverted musician, with more success than ever APC hinted at. While his previous work was littered with manic sabotage, here Beans has allowed his ideas to develop and flow as his vision has gained new strength. So if he gets absorbed in a musical motif he stops rapping, lets tracks fade out on glorious rolls of drowner Arthur Russell funk and echoed static, with tracks like "We'll Get Love You Lose" and "Composition in Wolf" coming on like some strange hybrid of Outkast and late 70s EMS. Beans keeps things simple, minimalist, the beats and beats to that the strange purr of electronics and trebly noise give maximal impact. Check the sio-no dancshill shuffle and ghostly shudders of synth of "Outbreaker," or "Gold Skiff" slip away from New Kingdom-style blather-into some weird new take on Peter Dinklage's *De Housing*. The stunning "Dreize" and some superb remixes from Prefuse 73 close out with ghostly trails and a psychedelic suggestiveness that you won't hear on any HipHop record this side of ELUDOGS's *Reinvention*.

Through Beans will never truly slip the underground leash with music this bugged out and bleak, he's made an album that has performed the twin heresies of being both totally entertaining, and instantly accessible to both avant rap devotees and curious passers-by. (Neil Kulkarni)

BIG TYMERS DOWN SOUTH

There's Manny Fresh, the "Player's Ball" video, rating him the best of celebrities on Outkast's chicken take-it-a-bigger-than-a-bass-cake. The windows say, Herin. Manny puts on Outkast's 1994 debut album and takes it from the bottom: the ending "Player's Ball Reprise" with the Skinny Black agh-oh. Manny then grabs the cross between piano before it gets out the back door, refreshes it, grabs Ludovico's "Hi Whoozy Ways, Jazzz Pha and himself and makes a song too good to be buried as an album cut. Right when Manny says "wood steering wheel", the Dynamics quad drops, the "Rumburgen" song, and family pictures jump back. The words turn his "Nack U Da Woods" all over again. Uf Wayne figures he just stole Snooky Dogg's pretty ring and Pha adds,

"That's Southern cousin." Accordingly, Manny has a "Southern-ass brain", a "Southern-ass dog" and when he drinks beer he gives a "Southern-ass burp". Luckily the genre as a Southern ass break and sent the keyboard to the store for snacks. Nothing here but piano, bass and guys who might all fit in the Coup De Ville if the speakers land on the hood and someone goes in the trunk.

DIPLO DJ SHADOW LIVE SESSION MEGATROID MIX TURNTABLE CD

Dead Prez told us the Domino's Pizza guy is the Miami Boss symphony that is Shadow's "Celestial Antithesis". By the time Bob "Only If" O'Callahan goes on the Nuclear space bass, Dead Prez has already run a credit card scam and swindled Wehrle. The blend is so tight you think they (Shadow, Diplo, Prez, Bob and the British guys in the orchestra) were all in it from beat one. This 45 minute mix by Hellerstein's Diplo tags along with Shadow's in June And On Time live DVD (where the latter re-enacts his own catalogue and throws in a Richard Ashcroft Vocoder for good measure). Diplo stays dirty before a cappella into some Shadow fixtureds and puts his own mutants to work as well. Atlanta's Destrall gets the "In/Flux" drum solo while Keyshia Bass hits the Electro Lux typewriter sounds of "Scatterbrain". Cleveland's most wanted jams the "BOY" key five times and scoffs "with the song". PEACE (Freestyle Fellowship), who knows half and song, was cooking double time long before anyone else in this mix and is found here rapping halfway out the back window while LAPD shoots off the dead bat.

Then Diplo gets to the clapping. The piano from "Blood Be the Measure" has its spirit lifted by a hard clap-off. There's electric chops for IV On The Radio. There's Devilish dance too fast for hardcore (or Marston's "Hardcore HipHop"). There's clapping from places where right now there's not much to clap about. And finally, there's an evocation for the sultry Martine, free from Thicky's rap and contributing to Diplo's upcoming album.

JADAKISS THE CHAMP IS HERE

Sensu indeed is the rapper who measures himself by his parallel peeling skills. "Fuck blind the best n-word/parallel park on the track." And it's not just Jadakiss is pushing a Ford Fiesta either. The hook is WWI Smith's AI, announcing itself in the wild dermis some 15 feet and a snoutless away from the max, trying to get Nate Dogg's attention. Blame this take banner for the rise in CFCs, as it's a summer reason to be on wheels rather than foot. It's all about Green Lantern's ceremonial corolla, like someone's about to face a war tribunal or lose their head for not attending. Jadu rymes around his airtime OK and his voice is so cold that the line about Pepsi Blue is greeted safe passage.

KANYE WEST UNRELEASED JOINTS VOL 1 NO LABEL, PROBABLY NOT

The "Through The West" seems isn't much of a remix but it's cool how Kanye keeps on the word "best" some times in a new, dead on production and maybe himself in the process. "Would You Like To Ride?", or at least the first 15 seconds, is one of his best: a mix 14 college basketball kick and piano rumble, highly loopy to later save someone's career. The hook greets about a Cadillac Escalade, which is impossible to parallel park so it rump always sticks out, clipping like messengers and sending unreleased promos flying into the midtown rain. Free free to accidentally ruin the and the tumble down Mink Yusuf's sense "My Way" is another sweet soul crush with the occasional socially conscious zinger and "La La La" features Jay-Z, recently spotted on stage at a Phoenix Jap-2 concert in Israel.

KAMAKAZEE FEAT BLAQ POET IT'S ALL GOOD/RIGHT HERE THE GROUP PHONO 12"

During a recent Queens vs Bronx/Mets vs Yankees debate in a Harlem kitchen, a native Queens rap historian wrote a ballpark frank in the air and huffed, "Oh yeah? Well what about Screwball?" In the mid-90s, Screwball looked into one of Marley's depest beats, a Soul Children piece originally intended for Nas's second album. Legend has it that Nas put down his wise and later heard said beat on the radio as a House Of MCs boogie along with a gentleman named Kamakaze, also KL. On "It's All Good", KL sounds like he'd rather stuff you in a trashcan than bother with a dirty battle rhyme. Producer E Blazé hands him an established guitar scratch and Kennedy piano and of remembrance of Smoothie De Hustler's "Broken Language". On the flip, KL is joined by former Screwballer Black Poet, who's deest about everyone in the phone book and is affiliated with someone named Natasque. Anyone who drives a Ford Pinto in their rhyme is not to be trusted with — plus you can gracefully park that sucker without knocking over the lid in the car.

MOBB DEEP GOT IT TWISTED

Thomas Dolby brings a skewed version of "She Blinded Me With Science" as an East LA or show after Alchemist runs the BOB through the canyons and emerges with a bassline so clean you can actually see it. The keyboard awed (switched just before "Science") becomes an evil string section, sailing by at school zone calm, slow enough to read the rim inscription ("Poetry in motion"). Read: Mobb Deep could have really liked to beat those to click up the class instead. "Ain't no party once we crash the party" while naming home twice says you at least got this instrumental. The album has a heavy smoke and doom being sucked through teeth. But they should remake Diplo's "One Of Our Subscribers Is Missing".

THE MARXEN (MOP) MARXEN CINEMA TRIPLEX MICRO-CD

Sunday morning, Father's Day. Two CDs full of Mop yelling and clattering themselves not door. A lanky old man stalks by in a sharp brown suit, peeks under their Gory but umbrella and says, "I'm a papa, a grendpa and a great grandpa" it's hard to believe Billy Danz and "I'm a papa" have been throwing clock parties and winking nose ordinances for so albums while Gern's monotone goes hoarse. One CD is 8 sides, early classics and unreleased material but inexplicably no "Hend in U Business Remix". The other, Mamon Cinema, includes a remake of a Ghetto Boys classic ("Nine & Two Dips") and a beef commercial that Wile Dole groovy ("The Best People") should accept. Funny makes like Biggie Smalls drawing Slim Pickens's horse from his holster. "Bloody Munch" has a lame Jan Rush hook but it's hard to beat an inset like "You live-ass wannabe live-ass ball break as grrrr-sss slrry-sss caterpillar". The album's best production, "Here Today Gone Tomorrow" is an ER bedside of bedtime beeps, rife about (the real thing), incredibly well-aimed dead space and Aaron Neville haunted by a string section. At times the beat is capped with a sinner and you wonder if it's really. The 50 Cent up to Big Daddy Kane's old disco/barber sounds like a flourish and thought MOP's barking guns are the franchise, remember the old military anti-gutter: "This is my gun, this is for fun, take 'Slade" (spelling intentional), an unauthorized duet with the BOs otherwise that mid last "By Your Side" into an oath of street loyalty. Somehow Sade's "By" (which sounds like "hail") becomes "hail", and when she goes "I'll dry your eye", Romy, clearly choked up, gets the hell out.

ROB SONIC DEATH VENDOR/DYSEXIA DEATHMATE JUNK 15"

A headbutt from Rob Smith will easily claim out your ears. Rob used to collect plastic football helmets from gumball machines and then ran them together until their facemasks fell off. Sonic Smith's Sanity Anwar slowly ravelled (or unravelled, depending on the concussion) melancholy against your head. Since gang solo, Rob has really tightened the windings on his raw (and all you hear "Strange Harman") and his drum machine synth beats are sharp and mean. Death Vendor is DJ Boogie with a grudge and Old School rattle. "Do the watch pot bar and the planet explodes" Things like "Adrenaline gump/don't Stunt luncheon" sound nice even if you don't know. Rob packed a M/A/S/H sandwich panel in his Maryland preschool. The flaps of reading into this too much is "Dysexia", not a picnic sweetest but an understanding that reverse is as R to L pain back through the day. 1) three knock through 200th, 2) watched pocketmaker have face-off with movement, 3) use "Case history" in a rhyme Rob can turn a name (Sunny Wayne Detective Wayne for instance) like a phrase that a beat. Check your Lenth Swift lunchbox for dents. □

Jazz & Improv

Reviewed by Julian Cowley

GAIL BRAND & MORGAN GUBERMAN BALLGAMES & CRAZY DREAMS CD

Californian vocalist Morgan Guberman suggested that he and London-based trombonist Gail Brand should perform as a duo. The idea was a shrewd one, for the outcome, recorded under the supervision of Miles Boisen in Oakland, is outstandingly successful in the terms it establishes for itself.

Guberman utters ceaselessly like a man possessed, slipping in and out of words, in and out of character – confiding old times, slurring hobo drunk, preacherly zealot, big baby grudging prowess. His more abstract murmurings range from arched phrasings to deeply rounded and flecked sounds. Brand enters into sympathetic and constructive dialogue – echoing, anticipating, nudging and cajoling. Her versatile response, with subtle and effective use of mutes, confirms that she is an exceptionally attentive, resourceful improviser. Guberman may fall short of the dramatic vigour of Phil Minton, dozen of male improvising vocalists, but his real purposefulness underlying his volatility

BRÖTZMANN/MCPHEE/ KESSLER/ZERANG TALES OUT OF TIME HYDROLOGY CD

A Chicago summit during the summer of 2002 defined these memorable exchanges between Peter Brötzmann and Joe McPhee, grizzled giants of free music. Now less explosive, their ferocity subordinated to a mature taste for belated and a need to elude lost associates, both men retain their affecting directness in handling sound, though reserves of awesome power remain in evidence. Brötzmann is heard on alto as well as tenor. McPhee plays tenor, trumpet and pocket corner.

Tributes are paid to bassists Fred Hopkins, Wilbur Morris and Peter Kowald. Kent Kessler takes up their expressive legacy, his arco voicings designed to complement the horns in their tassels and lamentations. Michael Zerang is a genuine percussionist, his assured and energetic rhythmic sense coupled with an ear for the melodic and cosmic potential of his instruments.

KYLE BRUCKMANN GASPS AND FIGURES 400 MUSIC DOCUMENT CD

Kyle Bruckmann's new CD locates him squarely in the ranks of such uncompromising sonic anatomists as trumpeter Greg Kelly and recent deceased Bobo Ramsey. Bruckmann, a double-reed specialist, uses oboe, English horn, the Chinese suona and Middle Eastern mizmar to probe the elemental interface of moist breath and sounding instrument under close amplified scrutiny.

His findings range from precarious multiphonic textures to misty, sustained consonic bleats and rich choroidal drones. There's an air of analytical rigour but also aesthetic pleasure in design and discovery.

GEORGE BURT & RYMOND MACDONALD OCTET FEATURING LOL COXHILL POPCORN PWR CD

The third in an occasional series of releases concerning episodes from the bald soprano's outings north of the English-Scotts border, this one is made particularly appealing by the presence of singer Aileen Campbell and her pop-soul machine, the drawing, rattling, sputtering cycles of which provide a sonic basis for group improvisations. On two tracks, rigging the charges, Campbell substitutes a hairdryer.

Coxhill, guitarist Burt, saxophonist MacDonald and their Mayanall associates engage in some pleasantly loose improvising that conveys about all the pleasures of collaborative performance. Nicola MacDonald's melodic incursions transcend the congeniality of the occasion as does Alan Pargue's effusive, high-spirited drumming. A timely reminder of that feeling called community.

DENNIS GONZÁLEZ NY QUARTET NY MIDNIGHT SUITE GUSAN CD

Dallas trumpeter Dennis González convened a potent quartet for his appearance in a New York summer festival in summer 2003. In November he was again joined by Elvira Escobar on tenor, bassist Mark Helias and drummer Mike Thompson to record this studio session. Both González and Escobar are expert exotopologists, preferring melodic calls that mutate fluently and occasionally leap surgically from infields. They evoke a wide spectrum of jazz precedent that's been personalised and developed within their own rhythmic conditions. Helias and Thompson are adept at supporting and extending the horns, adding other layers as they texture the elastic flow of the music.

RUSS LOSSING/ED SCHULLER/PAUL MOTIAN AS IT GROWS HYDROLOGY CD

NYC pianist Russ Lossing has an elliptical style, alternating between tentatively serene runs driven by a strong left hand and isolated chords or phrases suspended in mid-air, made luminous with implication and the prospect of unfulfilled possibilities. His music is at once well verbalised and enigmatic, quiet and condensed.

For this session, recorded in New Jersey in 2002, he was joined by bassist Ed Schuller and drummer Paul Motian, players who match Lossing in musical sophistication and are finely attuned to navigate the oddly resonant spaces he opens up. Ten tracks, including the five-part "Suite Of Time", are impressively consistent.

SUNNY MURRAY/JOHN EDWARDS/TONY BEVAN HOMER COOKING IN THE UK HYDROLOGY CD

Home Cooking In The UK is the sound of bassist John Edwards and tenor and bass saxophonist

Tony Bevan relishing the opportunity to stretch out in company with an authentic free jazz legend. On this 2003 recording Sunny Murray's drumming still displays the essence of the tidal quality that played such a key role in redefining the music during the 1960s. Inevitable ripples and breaks, conascents and washes of cymbal apoplexy signal the deep pulsation of energy within his performance. In response to the creative latitude Murray introduces, Edwards and Bevan are articulate without fuss or bluster. The set holds steadily across three tracks, culminating in the suitably fiery "Split Decision".

LARRY OCHS/ JOAN JEANRENAUD/ MIYA MASAKO FLY FLY FLY INTAKT CD

Roxa Quartet member Larry Ochs has been playing in a trio with Fred Fric's electric guitar and the electronically processed koto of Miya Masaoka. Here Masaoka plays acoustically with former Kronos Quartet cellist Joan Jeanrenaud and Ochs on tenor and soprano saxophones. Four Ochs compositions incorporating conventional notation, timeliness, graphic scoring and visual cues generate impressive intensity that is both intimate and sensuous.

The cellist's mellowness and melancholy flit around beauty, reflecting tenor lines; the koto's brittle polyrhythm accentuates the soprano's nervy edge. But the picture is much richer and more intricately complex than such stereotypical roles suggest. The formal pose of each piece contains extraordinary fluidity of musical identity, continual transformations of mood and material that define rather than jeopardise coherence.

JEFF PARKER/ KEVIN DRUMM/ MICHAEL ZERANG OUT TRIOS VOLUME TWO ADAMCITY CD

The title is a declaration of intent from this Chicagoan trio, and a cloud of mystery interference shrouds the way into their outness. Once the fog lifts Parker and Drumm, on guitars and synthesizers, and Zerang playing percussion and subbass, make lively, event-packed music sparkling with energetic collisions, deflections and sparse deviations. They bustle in Spontaneous Music Ensemble's long and explosive wake without getting locked into a loop or narrow improvisation. The continuum of their sound takes on numerous different complexities as it tumbles into existence. A great deal of our terrain has been staked and settled in recent decades but, as Parker, Drumm and Zerang show, investigative inquiry applied with restlessness can still find untamed spaces.

WILLIAM PARKER & AD PEJNBERG BROOKLYN CALLING DINO CD

Dutch saxophonist Ad Pejnberg is best known as founder of The Six Winds, a band recent that has included John Tchicai. Much of Pejnberg's

playing has been with drummers, including a regular outfit with Louis Moholo and Thebe Lesibe. The rhythmic cunning required for both those contexts is a defining characteristic of his melodic approach to the baritone horn. He makes effective use of its puffiness and can be tremendously expressive in the course of this recent encounter in New York with bassist Willem Parker.

That said, there is no straining for unexpected effects. He evolves open patterns that Parker's virtuosic enhances and elaborates. One track has Pejnberg warbling on soprano, his instrument of choice for street performances. It's good to hear the sound in such an unassuming creative context.

SUN RA SPACESHIP LULLABY UNHEARD MUSIC SERIES/AMVISTIC CD

A vocal trio called Nu Sounds serves up a sugar-coated rendition of "Stranger In Paradise" with Robert Barry at the drums and Sen Ra on piano. It's as incongruous as Allan Jones bursting into sincerely sentimental song midway through a Man Brown solo. SpaceShip Lullaby collects 37 such recordings from the mid-1960s by vocal groups formed by the great Sun Ra prior to his departure for interplanetary flight paths.

As John Corbett observes in his sleeve notes, "I was might be shocked to hear the level of schmaltz in some of this material." But lodged in the mundane arrangements and accompaniment to creeping are acoustronics and outlandish touches that fashionshadow tips to celtic. The Cosmic Rays are especially interesting, despite the faded sound quality of the recording here, with Ra venturing onto electric piano and an ensemble that includes saxophonist Pat Petric and John Gilman and bassist Ronnie Byrnes. The quints and folkish soundings of SpaceShip Lullaby should certainly find favour with both students of avant-garde and devotees of the eclectic lounge.

RICH WEST BEDOUIN HORNBOOK PENTATONIC CD

LA drummer Rich West acts as nucleus to a lean sounding quartet with Chris Heenan on bass clarinet and alto saxophone, trumpeter Bruce Friedman, Jeremy Driscoll's electric guitar and Scott Ray's tuba. West's compositions include the syntonic melodic phrasings and accents, the bitless West life is a circus' music that New Note wrote for Fellini's films.

The instrumentation lends itself to such allusion, which constitutes a helpful point of coordination as West's musical horizons extend out in other quite different directions. Tightly scored ensemble sections loosen into free play, funk gives way to atmosphere. One track develops out of a fuzzy drone, the next is underpinned by a bluesy loop. West accommodates successfully the syntonic inclinations and instrumental idiosyncrasies of his collaborators, with centres of interest continually shifting. □

Modern Composition

Reviewed by Philip Clark

GEORGES APERGHIS TINGEL TANGEL

WPA CD
Like Louis Armstrong, Georges Aperghis migrated from his native Greece to Paris and, like him, Xendex, his music has a canny sense of what the similarity ends. Aperghis's work is intimately connected with his understanding of the theatre and his compositional technique is based on his experience of musicians and actors equally. His pieces often have satirical tringes and Tangel Tangel invents its own intriguing world of abundant colour, realised for an ensemble of soprano voice, accordion and percussion. He keeps the narrative non-specific and deals in archetypes of humour and tragedy, linking the performers square in the face with structural candidness. Soprano Valérie Lickes takes the custard up with relish. The disc also contains baritone Lionel Perrin's nimble performance of Jacobacci, another of Aperghis's solo realizations exploring substructures of language and meaning.

MICHAEL VON BEL JAGDSTUCK

EDITION RU CD
Between 1962 and 1968 German composer Michael von Biel created a unique series of works which investigated a trajectory between noise and everyday "found" musical objects, after which he switched to visual arts. The most audible reference point for von Biel's music is Edgar Varèse. In his ensemble piece Jagdstück (Hunting Piece), the industrial rumblings of electrically amplified baroque grills cut through a surface of brass instruments playing traditional hunting music while electric guitars simultaneously crash the landscape. Von Biel inaugurates a rudimentary aesthetic close between the Neoboulevard social attitudes embodied in the 1960s and a dark humour that has bannier modern day realities. This music is revolutionary, a visionary achievement for 1966. These fastidiously heard string quartets (1961, 63 and 65) reinvent the old World ensemble as a noise machine and then reapply traditional gestures, while the characterful, electronic Füssing is on a different level to much dispassionate electroacoustic music of the time – thinking James Deet Helmut Lachenmann perhaps?

JAMES DILLON THE BOOK OF ELEMENTS

CORRADO CANONICI A ROARING FLAME

WPA CD
Scottish composer James Dillon's 60 minute piano work The Book Of Elements (1997-2003) is as spiritually uplifting and intellectually stretching a piece as I've heard in a long time. Dillon unveils his title as referring to the meaning of elements in chemistry being an "irreducible substance" and in a wider philosophical sense of the "foundation of everything", but his piece must also be seen as a celebration of his profound understanding of what makes a piano tick. References to

Beethoven, Schumann, Brahms, Massenet and Xenakis flow but are adroitly contained within gender structural schemata. Dillon is often compared as a disciple of Michael Finnissy and Brian Ferneyhough, but his counterpart between a complexity of surface and a folk-like clarity continues to evolve into an ever more personal vision. Japanese pianist Noriko Kawai delivers an inspiring performance.

Dillon's Roaring Flame, for double bass and soprano, A 1962 piece, lends its title to a new mental disc by the brilliant Italian bassist Conrado Canonici. Dillon's piece starts a test by 13th century poet Clara d'Amico, confirming glassy vocal lyricism and frothy basslines. Other pieces by Finnissy, Christopher Fox, Dennis Barrell and a surprisingly gritty early work by David Russell add up to an engaging listen.

ROGER DOYLE CHARLOTTE CORDAY AND THE LAMENT OF LOUIS XVI

IRISH COMPOSER Roger Doyle "became a self-taught drummer on bongos and basout tins", and later became a composer, writing Six Pieces For Pupils Who Don't Like Exams when he was a poor teacher. He is now based in Holland and works for the Dutch Radio and The Concert Of Louis XI to celebrate the bicentenary of the French Revolution. In 1989 Doyle assembled the piece from samples of drum rolls and vocal material, whipping the whole lot into a potpourri evocation of an imaginary parade passing through the streets of Paris. The impact of Cage's Rowlocks can be felt in the general bustle and energy of the piece, and the hint of modern day Paris in the closing moments adds a thoughtful flourish. Also included is the first volume of Passades, Doyle's piece based on software, which acts like the freeze-frame and zoom in/out on a DVD. He sensitive ear produces capturing results.

HEINZ HOLLIGER VIOLIN CONCERTO

ECM NEW SERIES CD
As an instrumentalist Heinz Holliger reinvented the humble oboe during the salad days of the 1950s Central European avant garde, and he's also been a significant presence as a composer. His output can be uneven, as his 2003 Violin Concerto proves by taking too long to establish much that's interesting. The piece was inspired by the Swiss painter and violinist Louis Soutter (1872-1942), and Holliger notes that Soutter's "nervous breathshots can be translated into pinches on an almost one-to-one basis". Soutter also experimented with design paintings that could be heard either way up, a concept Holliger mimics with the interchange of pitches and rests. The opening movement is muddy and meandering, but then Holliger discovers increasing tonal clarity and paints with refined and oil-like colours. The weirdly astringent and almost second of the first two movements are brilliantly conceived, and violinist Thomas Zehetmayer's charisma adds a whole other dimension to the performance.

GUUS JANSSEN HOLLYWOOD O.K. PIECES

CLASSIC SWEDEN CD
Pianist and composer Guus Janssen has backed George Lewis, John Zorn and Ben Bernink, while also producing fully composed pieces for Ensemble Modern and The Kronos Quartet. Hollywood O.K. Pieces formed in his mind after he heard tapes of Hollywood film musicians "doing their own peculiar musical enterprises outside the studio – very strange interpretations with 'outcast' jazz instruments like oboe and bassoon". Janssen doesn't consider himself to be a jazz composer but his juxtapositions of personality-plus-written material with improvisation has terrific synergy. He creates a spectrum of highly original instrumental colourings from an ensemble of Peter van Bergen (clarinet), Vincent Chancey (French horn), Michael Reinhardt (bassoon) plus a jazz rhythm section. Knowledge twists with the contours of lines borrowed from the saxophone master, while the 'on the fly' structures of Anglo-American turn unexpectedly at every corner.

GEORGY LIGETI THE LIGETI PROJECT VOLUME 5

TELARC CLASSICS CD
The first volume of this series appeared in 1996 on Sony Classical, and now reaches its final volume on Telarc. Highlights are performances of Ligeti's fantastical 1960s Aventures and Nouvelles Aventures, pieces that juxtaposed the conventional narrative of music theatre in favour of stylised gesture and emotion. Singers Sarah Leonard, Linda Hirst and Oran Etkin tap into the heart of Ligeti's dark slapstick, and the instrumentalists of The Schoenberg Ensemble respond to their scorching and retching with cavalier aplomb. The vocalised quality of Ligeti's 1958 electronic piece Artikulation covered discs on Varese and Boulez and Nouvelles Aventures and makes for a revealing comparison. The disc also offers a rarely heard early Cello Sonata and examples of Ligeti's formative studies of Hungarian and Romanian folklore.

BRIAN OSBORNE MUSIC CONSCIENTE

NO LABEL CD
Brian Osborne is New York based and has worked with The George Strait Ensemble, and the Rio Music For Jams and Percussion. His solo CD restricts itself to metal sounds only, with prominent roles for gongs, pipes, bells, finger cymbals and metallic odds 'n' ends. He transforms gentle patterns into richly placed constructs pitched tentatively between naivety and complexity. His piece has great titles too: Ropes Unravel, Iron Bucket and Broken Full Of Sparks become The Stars.

PETER SCARTABELLO CAST

WORLD MUSIC CD
Put your hand on my forearm and whisper the signal is getting stronger... in my ear – not performance instructions but actually the title of

Peter Scartabello's meditative work for solo guitar, here played by Ben Moran. Rhode Island based Scartabello's strength is his subtle, imaginative feel for textures that seamlessly mesh into something greater than their individual parts. His 1997 Cast for string quartet is a mournful piece, with a sound-world balanced somewhere between late Schubert quartets and Morton Feldman. The Charleston Quartet play with remarkable stiffness and control, and the disc ends with Electro-Magma for bass clarinetist accompanied by miscellaneous metallic rattles.

DAN TRUEMAN MACHINE LANGUAGE

EDITION RU CD
Dan Trueman's background is as a classical violinist and performer of traditional Norwegian Hardanger fiddle music. However, he writes in his saxes, "I got really sick of playing the violin myself", still wanted to play the violin. Unfortunately Trueman's solution – hooking his electric violin up to a laptop and writing his own music – was also part of the problem. He writing his string instruments like a glove, but the technical acquiescence limits his aesthetic ambition. The opening rhythmic bounce of Spring Rhythm quickly develops into fixed funk, and the ensemble writing on Counterfeit Curo is just too affable for its own good. Trueman does have an inventive ear for string textures, but there's not much purpose beyond the notes.

CHRISTIAN WOLFF/ ROBYN SCHULKOWSKY PERCUSSIONIST SONGS

CHRISTIAN WOLFF (RE-) MAKING MUSIC – WORKS 1952-99

MUSIC CD
The double-meaning title of (Re-) Making Music encapsulates Wolff's open-minded approach to composition, an attitude summarised by trombonist James Rulifson: as one of constantly posing the question "How do we make music?" The double disc set surveys the multitude of small scale chamber vignettes that form the backbone of Wolff's output. The Barton Workshop's understanding of his intentions is assured. The separation of his music lies in its centrifugal axis between improvisation and the discipline of canons and strict counterpoint. His work has a rare sense of deliberation and his insistence on "making" pieces rather than composing them implies a sense of no-nonsense tacit craft. Pieces like Erase for viola, cello and piano have the spontaneity of process-as-composition, yet Wolff never quite reveals what that process is.

The Matchless disc, meanwhile, documents Wolff's creative partnership with percussionist Robyn Schulkowsky. Wolff's concept of percussion writing is decidedly anti-machine – the two lay out their Percussionist Songs and Percussionist Dances work with delicately unfolding material stripped of excess or busy decoration. □

Outer Limits

Reviewed by Ken Hollings

ALPHANE MOON EXPERIMENTING WITH AN AMEN OGGUM CD

OUR GLASSIE AZOTH THE MAGICIAN'S HEAVENLY CHORUS OGGUM CD

Reclusive Welsh duo Daf and Rhyd Roberts rival electronic pioneers Louis and Bebe Barron in their enduring love of feedback and all its painfully glorious manifestations. The agonising last durations of *The Magician's Heavenly Chorus*, stretched to breaking point over 25 minutes, reach the gigantic underground generators pulsing at the heart of Altair IV in Forbidden Planet. It traces a direct line connecting the cybernetic theories of Norbert Wiener with the alchemical diagrams depicted on the cover of a CD featuring tracks formerly available only as limited edition releases. That *Alphane Moon* and *Our Glassie Azoth* share the same personnel and perform strikingly similar material is probably the quaint but least disturbing aspect of these marvelously hermetic recordings.

NELS CLINE & DEVIN SARNO BURIED ON BUNKER HILL CRIMINAL FRUIT CD

Five years on from *Edible Flowers*, their last collaboration on the WN label, guitarist Nels Cline and bassist Devin Sarno have added studio multitracking to their deployment of loops, delays and effects to further dent the runs and sustain of their sound. The relative surface calm of opener "Swinging London" hides a churning maelstrom beneath, thereby weakening how with Ground Fault's self-imposed classification system of volume levels. The sleeker song "It's a Series I (Spaced) one," which is true to the trend of "Only Roses" and "A Root in the West," but the darker dynamics lurking within "hydrofoil" suggest *Buried On Bunker Hill* would be an easy fit for Series II (medium) or even Series III (loud). You have been warned.

HOLLYDRIFT WAITING FOR THE TILLER PARASOUND CD

You really want to hope that Hollydrift's Mathias Anderson doesn't have more in store for you. The guy creates music that sounds as if it can walk through walls. Folded deep within each compressed composition are moments of pure drama and genuine awe. Against ragged scenes of noise, a shadowy puppet theatre of disembodied voices and electro-magnetic exchanges takes place. A set of multi-frequency tones, the constant repetition of a girl's name and a salesman dictating a business letter conspire on "Mansa Relay" to conjure up scenes that wouldn't be out of place in a Guy Maddin movie.

"Lakeshore Skyline" evokes dispassionate memories of a "summer evening at the transmitter." War seems to have broken out over the highways on "Very Red Magenta" and that's just for starters. Whatever ghosts Anderson is

exorcising here, you wouldn't want them moving in next door either.

JASCH SHIMMER DOCC CD

The first release on a DOCC set to directly involve label owner Pura, Shimmer marks the debut of a Swiss electronic artist whose work has hitherto been presented mostly in gallery installations. A collaborator with America's audio artist Johnny Deaton in the audiovisual project *PRAD*, Jasch favours gradually accumulative effects, predominantly pure tones and the occasional flash of harmonic "Lovely's Rainbow", for example, suggesting an appropriate counterbalance to "gymn". With a design in double bass and a Master in digital arts, Jasch appears to have strayed more of his sounds from bowed and plucked strings, their presence being most noticeable on "Phenotype", which he then manipulates via his own customised software. The results seethe and howl, as any installation art can, waiting for someone to press through them.

KANG TAE HWAN TRIO LOVE TIME NYF CD

Starting in a mode so subdued it seems positively furtive, Kang trio saxophonist Kang Ji Heon leads percussionist Mako Kawabata, and Acid Mothers Temple member Ichikawa Yoshitomo through the creation of a single group composition. Coming in just shy of 50 minutes, *Love Time* is a work of meditative intensity. You can imagine this three musicians barely making eye contact. Hwan has a visceral feel for the textures and textures to be discovered in the manipulation of his instruments' need, his long capricious lines finding a deft response in Kawabata's sizzling and Yoshitomo's use of bowed percussion. Even a switch towards the end to treated guitar and drums by Kawabata and Yoshitomo respectively is made nearly in check by Hwan's focused playing.

KAPOTTE MUZIK CURING WITHOUT KILLING FENCING PLATWOOD CD

20 years on from the project's inception, Bozzeman's Frans de Waard has now released his first studio recording as Kapotte Muzik. An evocation of the auditory experiences to which anaesthetised patients are subjected during surgical procedures, *Curing Without Killing* is a series of opuscular hush and vibrations presented as one continuous track. Even considering the work's explicit connection to extreme sensory impressions that are not supposed to be happening, de Waard's ability to refuse even the briefest of silences with a sense of menace is quite extraordinary.

LONGSTONE LIFE SPAN BLACK BIRD AND PLACENTA CD

Our fascination for space is essentially nostalgic for space. We are constantly seeing it through

the eyes of others. Longstone's fifth album, a rough crossover selection of ten untitled instrumental, expresses a fond remembrance for the limitless possibilities to be found in space rock's past. As analogue synth and guitar effect pedals, bloops and beeps, rhythm boxes and sequencers tell their story in willing direct tones, Mike Cross and Mike Ward combine to shift perspectives with their usual aplomb. It's a bit like tuning through a radio late at night — the same exuberance of hearing familiar things distorted by extreme distance. The occasional voice is captured off the airwaves. It all makes sense as you drift from station to station. Even the Speak and Spell name has a few pertinent things to say about synths. It depends on which buttons you push. Whenever it's clear that Cross and Ward know what they're doing.

MASSONI STILLBORN DREAMS SPACE AGE CD

A dry, cryptic, enigmatic run through John Massoni's follow up to *Sandwaver Sessions*, recorded for the Space Age label in partnership with former Spacemen 3 manager Sonic Boom. "Happy days, sweetie pie," a woman's voice intones over and over again, a counterpart to Rich Hillier's distracted vocal arrangement, while Massoni fashions a world of pointed anagrams around them. Such casual sapidity goes well with the quickness and spontaneity of Massoni's playing. Like stunted tape recordings and twining keyboards on "Spirits", mixed by Sonic Boom, have a heady immediacy to them. "Memory As Flame" is all brightness and harsh surfaces, "Thornbush" an uncomfortable slurring of taped guitar noise. *Stillborn Dreams* may not take you to the happiest place on earth, but it has a genuine vibrancy to it.

MEMORY CELLS NO PEOPLE HERE ARCANT CD

Originally the soundtrack to an Ambient VHS video release shot by Stephen Remicks while he and fellow group members Anthony Carroll and Adrienne Flynn recorded their 2000 debut album *Night, No People Here* is available on CD for the first time. Formed in 1999 in the bedroom of a Dublin council house, Memory Cells broke up in May 2001 at the end of their one and only gig in Belfast, which must have been quite an event. The moody and muted sonorities of their home recordings, preserved for memory in fetching handmade sleeve art, suggest a site destined for interesting things. Remicks, for example, went on to make a short film about Richard Shaw, whose early writings in *Amazing Stories* helped prepare America for the flying saucer scores of the 1950s.

JON MUELLER/BHOB RAINY/ JIM SCHOENECKER JON MUELLER/BHOB RAINY/ JIM SCHOENECKER CRIMSON CD

A set of group explorations featuring Jon Mueller on ragged percussion, BhoB Rainy on barely

recognisable saxophone and Jim Schoenecker on a grudgingly proton synthesizer, these pieces probe every scuffed surface and dusty corner of a worn-out world. Even the titles of the four compositions hint at the best stages of decay: the extended and dry of the man two sequences, "There nothing much have passed" and "Holek" make a virtue of exhaustion, while the shorter "[shaded paper, belt]" and "Two battered to read", opening and closing the album, find a use for those last remaining glimmers of nervous energy. A twitchy, nervous offering, but it holds the attention nonetheless.

NO XIVIC UNESKJA ONYX CD

Nothing much happens here among the deep domes and sombre industrial installations, but what does has authority to it. Recorded and produced by Henrika Rytönen for Finland's fancy Onyx label, *Uneskja* is a dejected moment protected if it seems easy to lose yourself in the slow subterranean contractions of tracks like "Gloamne tears", with its distant sounds of boom on metal, or "Unipuu", featuring ethereal vocals from Tine Oksanen, that's probably because you've almost certainly heard these effects somewhere before. It becomes an endless recombination. "Vilting Culture" is the Onyx mission statement. Sticking closely to the cozy familiar should just about do it.

PEDESTRIAN DEPOSIT VOLATILE HOSPITAL CD

If they ever develop a means of somnolently blurring unwanted percolate matter out of the human body, chances are the more audacious parts of it will sound like this. From central California's San Joaquin Valley, indie rock Pedestrian Deposit, we'll just blow the wax out of your ears, they'll remove the ink from your belly button, any toe jam that might have survived your morning shower, plus maybe a few other bodily by-products too indelicate to mention here. We're talking excretion with extreme prejudice here. These guys throw volume, pitch and raw scowling power around, with tremendous verve.

SECOND THOUGHT PURJUE SECOND THOUGHT CD

Blowing its side from the far shore of land behind the edge of a royal forest, Ross Baker's latest release shows the same conceptual boldness as his *Rooshop* project in which he recorded as different varieties of his favourite snail. A 16 page booklet, containing overcast rural images of hedgerows and churches plus an ostensibly displaced first person narrative, accompanies this cycle of wistful instrumental sketches. Evoking the most corners of a desolate reinvented terrain, Purjue does a thorough job of peering out its boundaries and limitations. Such an in-between rumble and Baker's keyboards can give pleasure in the distance, making memories of a time when all of this was just fields. □

Print Run

New music books: devoured, dissected, dissed



The world won't listen: Eddie Prévost

MINUTE PARTICULARS

EDWIN PREVOST

COPYCAT PUNK 535
BY DAVID SUTHERS

AWM drummer Eddie Prévost is a fiercely articulate keeper of the free Improv conscience. For him, aesthetics and ethics are not separate categories, as philosophy traditionally has it. Making music and even listening to music are moral pursuits, or at least pursuits subject to morality. Contemporary artists are privileged individuals and Prévost proposes that they respectfully rename themselves "cultural workers". This prescription, plus his elevation of the "communarian" approach to music making may strike some readers as sinister, carrying with it as it does the hint, lingering odour of Maoist coercion. Prévost's idealism is certainly shockingly, unfashionably stark. However, given the miserably compromised and commodified musical times in which we live, isn't a corrective dose of this just what's needed?

Minute Particulars (published: *Meanings in Music Making: In the Wake Of Hierarchical Realignments And Other Essays*) outlines the need for an art that is "humane, contemporary and revolutionary in its nature", one sorely lacking today, if ever it existed. Prévost argues persuasively and methodically but also modestly. He looks upon the glibly eclectic and diverse state of modern music with suspicion rather than celebration. He's wary of electronics because of the power they confer on

the player to drown out his acoustic co-worker, as happened to his friend and AWM colleague John Tilbury during one unfortunate gig with the electronic orchestra NIMROD. Indeed, a similar criticism was levelled at Miles Davis during his electric period—that amplification precluded the musicians from listening to each other. Furthermore, argues Prévost, with electronics there is no "tacit" relationship between the musician and their instrument, a regrettable trend symptomatic of times in which technology is disconcerting us, rather than connecting us to the world. Sampling is doubtful, too, as it "in effect denies the history of the sampled object". Traditional musical forms are to be shunned because they lack openness, fluidly, have hardened into dogma, rules for their own sake. The artist who works alone, meanwhile, is merely perpetuating a romantic, flawed myth of the "hero" whose over-cultured status leads to false idolatry and passive abasement on the listener's part. Such artists, Prévost suggests, are apt to belong to that pernicious class of persons who "do things to" people rather than doing things with them.

Thus, Prévost walks us to the (implied) conclusion that there is only one valid and morally impeccable mode of music making—that practised by, well, Eddie Prévost and co. And not even all of them. One of the more remarkable features of *Minute Particulars* is that fellow AWM member Keith Rowe is frequently upbraided, for his avowed refusal to listen to his

fellow music makers onstage, for his penitencing sonic simulations of agony, which Prévost frowns upon. Could it be that profound disagreement is a key binding agent of AWM? Or does this hint at a solution?

For Prévost, free Improv is a working metaphor for an ideal for living and coexisting, with its emphasis on open and appropriate musical dialogue, its communarian approach to both fellow musicians and audience, its freedom from marketing and traditional musical constraints, its patient, unhurried and un-mechanised craftsmanship. "No sound is innocent," Prévost has previously argued, but through free Improv, the sounds generated are, at best, the least guilty.

All very true and beautiful. However, it would be a grating, grey-capped world indeed in which the sole musical activity consisted of, say, spontaneous, acoustic dialogue between percussion and trombone and are that would have to be enforced rather than encouraged—the musical equivalent of an agrarian state. Furthermore, is a perfect marriage of art and morality necessarily desirable? Prévost mildly chides John Cage for not having been initially aware of the Futurist musician Luigi Russolo. But does he acknowledge the (more than a) gain of truth in the Futurist dictum that "art can be nothing but violence, cruelty and injustice"? As for egalitarianism and anti-heroism, is it really regrettable that, for example, Jimi Hendrix drowns out Noel Redding on "Machine Gun" (Slight Return)? Would a more equitable musical

arrangement have made that a better record? Do we not need Übermenschen?

Conversely, is it fair to raise such strong magnifying glass about electronic music without taking into account that the musicians themselves might be aware of such magnifying, operating in good faith and, indeed, using electronic music 'against itself'?

In fairness to Prévost, he is carefully aware that free Improv is in no danger of establishing a global hegemony. Being a West Ham United fan, he's doubtless long since adjusted to perpetual disappointment. Moreover, he would probably so more desire such a hegemony than he would West Ham win the Premiership every season. Hence, this book is best read as a defence and articulation of the principles of Improv, as well as a generous injunction to be wary of motives and outcomes when making music. Furthermore, *Minute Particulars*, which also contains excellent, bristly pieces on Wynton Marsalis and The Gershwin Trio among others, is an intellectually groping and extremely engaging read. There are frequent moments when you want to stand and cheer in agreement. This is a vital text, which no one should be exempt from reading. It opens its mouth against what the author describes as the "silent ghetto" under which so much modern music, even the supposedly avant-garde, is produced, closes to ask fundamental questions far too infrequently posed: Why do we do this? Why do we listen to this? □

100 MODERN SOUNDTRACKS

PHILIP BROPHY
BFI SCREEN GUIDES PRK £10.99
BY KEN HOLLINGS

Let's talk about format for a minute here, because you may want to think about where you're going to keep this volume once you've finished reading it. Too short to fit with your DVD collection, too tall to sit comfortably alongside your CDs, the book's actual dimensions — handsome and easily manageable as they are — might suggest a home on the shelf reserved for the kind of cultural guide books that have been multiplying over the past few years.

But then this last option isn't going to work either. Always a stimulating and welcome contributor to this magazine's pages, film theorist and composer Philip Brophy can confidently be relied upon to offer his readers a little more than the comfortable overview, the easy historical option or the simple arrangement of track preferences. This is by no stretch of the imagination your 100 top movie tunes in digest form. Instead Brophy sets out to chart a shifting terrain that is simultaneously partial yet all-encompassing.

The audible content of a film, he argues, has its own dynamics, presence and duration. As such

it tells its own story — one that does not necessarily respond well to standard critical responses. The reader is consequently presented with an alphabetically organized selection of short essays, each one dealing with a specific film in terms of the singular oneness taking place on its soundtrack, be it music, sound, dialogue or an engaged combination of all three. The result is an engaging little book of heresies that's probably best read in silence, far away from the audiovisual "bombast" — to use one of Brophy's favorite critical terms here — of the films themselves.

All hereby, of course, is dependent on a certain degree of common assumption, and 100 Modern Soundtracks is no exception. It's aimed squarely at both the inviolate who has already built up a large record collection and the record collector whose listening habits have subsequently led them towards a certain type of movie. No bag surprise then to discover *Apocalypse Now*, *Taxi Driver*, *Lost Highway*, *Psycho*, *Scarface*, *Cas*, *Stalker* or *Blade Runner* discussed here.

In a very real sense the auditory and visual components of such films have become virtually interchangeable, and it's to Brophy's credit that he strives to bring back a little of the

exhilarating strangeness that first discovery of such films can bring. He shows even greater resource in his selection of Denis Jarnett's *Blue*, in which sequences of spoken word, hospital echoes and music are played out over an unweaving blue screen, and *The Pittsburgh Trilogy*, Stan Brakhage's unfurling 1972 study of human anatomy which constructs, in Brophy's words, "the loudest silent movie ever made".

Such extreme anomalies can inspire some of his best writing. Treating auditory effects as if they are autonomous entities capable of taking on a writing sensuous life of their own leads him to free up his response, allowing for daring shifts and provocative arguments. It's at his best when suggesting that film musicians have not been included in this survey because they are "mute documentarians than anything else in their assimilation of the spatial war between the Broadway stage and the Hollywood soundstage".

Less successful, perhaps, are those moments when, instead of focusing his writing upon effects, it becomes an effect in itself. Opening sentences are sometimes allowed to lengthen unhelpfully, allowing precise meaning to slip away. His preliminary summation of *Apocalypse Now*'s social and historical significance, for

example, should ideally come with its own turnoff ramp.

Word fragments abound; nouns frequently become adverbs or emerge as the passive forms of verbs. Such traits don't so much obscure meaning as render it unhelpfully amorphous at moments when a little more clarity would have been appreciated. They can also divert attention away from some of Brophy's bolder gestures, such as the decision to discuss music's relation to the overall composition of the soundtrack either as simply another sound source, thereby equating the use of the second movement of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* in *Kubrick's Clockwork Orange* with the swim chattering in Hitchcock's *The Birds* or the presence of Bobby Vinton's "Blue Velvet" in *Kenneth Anger's Scorpio Rising*, or by ignoring the composer as a named contributor altogether, outside of a brief mention in the film's main credits.

As a chafely slighting of auteur theory, such a move has obvious merit. Its wider implications, however, might require a larger, perhaps less linguistically astrophysic study — one that would unhelpfully find a place in anyone's bookshelf. It's very likely that Brophy will combast us again. □

SOUNDING NORMAN

KATHLEEN NORMAN
ASHGATE HBK + CD £49.99
BY ANDY HAMILTON

Sounding Art is a deftly subjective collection of writings — an "unashamedly personal response" to electronic music as "sounding art", explains sound artist Kathleen Norman. Norman moves from sharp musical observation to sometimes prescient commentary and poetic expression, and the book's strangeness is enhanced by the publisher's attempts at typographic variety — disconcertingly ugly typewriter fonts are presumably meant to evoke notes and jottings but come across as bad desktop publishing.

Discussion is keyed in to tracks on the accompanying CD, and perhaps its best to think of this book as a collection of commentaries on these extracts, which run from electroacoustic composition and electronic to documentary sound art and field recordings.

The first chapter, "Concrete Tales And Touching Trees", focuses on the shimmering white noise

effects of Iannis Xenakis's neglected *Concrete PH*, his introduction to Edgar Varèse's contribution to the Philips Pavilion at the 1958 Brussels World Fair. Amazingly, the Philips executives had originally considered Benjamin Britten as composer, but eventually archived Le Corbusier got his way and Varèse was commissioned, while the architects assistant Xenakis got title credit for his role.

Norman extracts use the "concrete" in musique concrète really to the substantial nature of the real, physical objects that produced the sounds. She also comments persuasively on the lack of narrative intent in Phil Nabel's *Chime*, a 45 minute documentary presented simultaneously with the multitracked drones of *Wilder Music* — though the extract is too brief to give much of a flavor.

Norman raises some important artistic questions — and expends some rare wit! — in discussing Peter Cusack's "Canalide Atmosphere", a sound environment recorded in East London's Lea Valley. She explains how Cusack's subtle editing creates a personal sound

map that contrasts both with "selectable 'new age' ambient recordings" and the didactic presentation of aural "exhibits". More interventionist is Paul Lansky's *Night Traffic*, which digitally "comb-filters" musical pitches from the sounds of traffic on a busy highway. Francesco Uffizi explains how, in his "Unlabeled HST", he is "fighting against a disposition of pure sound content into conceptual and referential elements... in trying to reach a transcendental level of profound listening that explores the crude possibilities of the sound matter by itself" (from an interview at www.francescouffizi.com). It's a profound question — which could perhaps have been explored more directly by Norman — but exactly that disputation amounts to, and how we struggle to avoid hearing the sounds of waves and insects in his piece.

An important theme is inspired by R. Murray Scherler's *World Soundscapes Project*, Norman interviews Scherler's colleague Hildegard Westerkamp, but the recordings and transcriptions of their meandering conversations

while walking through a park left me unmoved. More moving is Westerkamp's *Talking Rain* for two-channel tape, composed from raindrops from the west coast of British Columbia. The most entertaining track, though, is Pamela Zi's *Geopunk*, when Norman analyzes mightily. Make complex experts are interviewed discussing different computer operating systems. Asked for their definitions of "acid" and "red", they eagerly dig their own grave and jump in. This is a documentary record work that also features musical rhythmic patterns — it's formally well constructed, but in production terms the sound is "unclear", with room noise and crude edited cuts.

The book and disc conclude with classic noise and electronics from *Autarche*, *Terre Thaemitz* and *Menteb* (a fabulously chaotic extract from *Loop Rave Limited*), plus "White" from John Dewar's *World Soundscapes CD*, with a unspooled *Big Droney* soaring "White Christmas", assisted by an unprecedented collaboration between African Pygmies and a string orchestra. □

Cross Platform

Sound in other media. This month: Equipped with seismometers, artist Mark Bain can turn architectural structures into giant musical instruments and demolish buildings with sound alone. By Rahma Khazam



Left: Mark Bain's inflatable Sonosphere, amplifying the planet's seismic signals. Right: Bain recording radiation from a nuclear power plant

"In a way, the art world would rather be dealing with abstractions than the real thing," says Mark Bain, an American sound artist who's currently based in Amsterdam. "If a work is too real it belongs to the world of consumerism and mass production. But I wish to make art more than just art, where the work fully integrates into society, and the real and the simulation blur together." Blurring art and reality has always been the focus of Bain's HG Wells-like experiments: last year's Sonosphere, a six metre high inflatable speaker installed in an exhibition space in Oldenburg, Germany, magnified the normally inaudible seismic signals occurring below ground. Meanwhile, the portable earthquake machines he showed in Holland in 2001 produced severe tremors that spread through the surrounding area. Then there was Het Paard, a large music venue in The Hague slated for demolition. The oscillators he attached to the building activated the entire structure, inflicting severe damage on parts of the walls and ceilings.

Considering of sensing devices, oscillators and the occasional sculptural element, as in the case of Sonosphere, Bain's stark pieces are more concerned with the physicality of sound than aesthetic considerations. "The systems I design are not normal art pieces—they are more like mutated research technology. Most technology has a very focused use value, whereas I am interested in taking it in other directions." The implications of Bain's work are far reaching—his sonic attacks on structures, for instance, are a response to thoughtless architectural practices and the over-exploitation of the environment. "Property laws and urban planning can also be a form of spatial terrorism, of endless expansion, destruction and exploitation," he asserts. Bain's love/hate relationship with architecture goes back to his childhood—his father, brother and grandfather were all architects. He studied design for a while but soon abandoned it "due to all the structures

and rules and boring people. I was searching for a freer context for working." He found that context at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he spent time in the libraries studying, among others, the ideas of maverick engineer Nikola Tesla, and came up with a system for resonating buildings that allowed him to "play" structures. "The multi-resonator system I designed could drive waveforms into buildings," Bain comments, "like giant additive synthesis where you get different beatings of frequencies and shifted harmonics. I was basically designing systems that turned a structure into a musical instrument."

He soon began recording the results of these activation experiments with the help of arrays of earthquake detectors, which were capable of picking up the low frequencies involved. Fascinated by the hidden worlds they opened up, he began using them on their own, without the vibration system. "Thanks to these devices," Bain explains, "which acted like hypersensitive contact mics, I found this secret world of microsound lying beneath our feet and containing a quality of sublime heaviness." The *Laboratorium* project in Antwerp was one of a number of pieces inspired by these findings. It tapped the ambient sounds resident within the structure of a laboratory, the sound of all the impacts and vibrations travelling through it. The rich mellifluous drones they produced can be heard on the *Staalplaat* mini-CD *Vibrances*. These days, Bain is working with seismic listening stations around the world. This research has led to *Start/EndTime*, released on *Staalplaat* this month, which decodes and sonifies the ground vibrations created by the collapse of the World Trade Center and the two impacts. "I wanted to wait a while before releasing it so that it would not take on some kind of memorial aspect," he says. "For me it is more about the sound. If you imagine the Twin Towers acting as a tectonic tuning fork connected to the earth, when you listen to the impacts sped up a few thousand times,

you can actually hear the towers ringing."

The literally earth shaking implications of some of Bain's pieces mean that he is frequently obliged to tone down his work for reasons of insurance or plain fear on the part of cultural institutions. This happened at 2002's *Frequenzen* festival in Frankfurt, where he showed a modified version of his original heavy resonance project on account of the precariousness of the building. The oscillators he placed outside the *Schirn Kunststiftung* merely evoked the idea of resonance and destruction. Global politics have also had an impact on his work. Upgraded somewhat by the events of 11 September 2001, he feels the need to consider new ideas. As he points out: "How can I compete with that spectacle—Hollywood can't even match it!"

Bain's new line of research include ways of visualising sound that will heighten his auditory experiments. *Narrative Architecture*, recently shown at the *Densité +/- 0 Festival*, turns Paris's *École des Beaux-Arts* into an outdoor microphone, relaying all the micro-disturbances taking place within the structure to a listening space located at the end of one of the galleries. A high powered laser system beams a bright green line of light around the lower perimeter of the space, optically disengaging the walls from the floor and radiating the pulse of the building's internal structure. Bain is also working on a series of telephonic projects such as *HolTime*, a performance piece prefiguring the electronic surveillance systems of the future. During each performance, callers can phone in and listen to the sounds of Bain's body, the beating of his heart and such like. These live sounds are picked up by acoustic sensors embedded in his body—mirroring his monitoring projects for buildings and subterranean activity. As Bain puts it, "Live sound is everywhere, an orchestration that infects everything with microsound and vibration. For me, this is the living entity that defines our existence." □ *Start/EndTime* is out this month on *Staalplaat*

Crowds and power: images from John Oswald's *LIVE D'APPARTITION DVD*

IGGY & THE STOOGES

GREEN DING

BY EDWIN POUNCEY

In December 1981 at the Pontiac Silverdome, Michigan, Iggy Pop opened for the Rolling Stones. He was booed off stage after performing only a couple of songs and the hail of objects that were thrown at him in that short time included a rainbow Afro wig and a bowling ball. More than two decades later, Iggy returns to Detroit with his original group the Stooges, where they are greeted at the DTE Energy Music Theatre like heroes instead of villains, and Iggy is only too happy to show his gratitude. "I'M SO F*CKING GLAD TO BE HOME!" he yells at the top of his lungs before kicking-starting the rest of the group into action with an electrifying version of "1989," the original anthem for all torrid and frustrated urban youth, written and performed long before UK punk had fired its first shot. This recent concert footage of the three original Stooges—guitarist Ron Asheton, drummer Scott Asheton and Iggy, with Minuteman Mike Watt on bass guitar—is a joyous celebration. All are in fine form as they go through the Stooges songbook with classics "TV Eye," "No Fun" and "I Wanna Be Your Dog," which they play twice.

Second time around, sax player Steve Mackay is brought on, still blowing furiously on the same instrument he used on "LA Blues," during the group's *Furthest* session. This results in a massive blast of rock improvisation, with Iggy howling at the moon while Scott Asheton hammers an imaginary nail through his drum kit, and Ron Asheton adds high octave guitar feedback to complement Mackay's rascally squawling horn.

The "live" material includes "Legendary NY in-store gig" where the trio perform (on stools) before a small crowd crammed into a New York record store. The occasion is presumably to promote Iggy's *Silver Ring* album (poison for which are microphones), but this is as close as you can get to seeing The Stooges unleashed. The atmosphere is intimate and the gig is educational, with Iggy stopping every other song

to explain the origin of the group's material. It's a genuinely human performance that is full of original rock 'n' roll spirit, promising—as Iggy announces on stage at Detroit, "I AM NOT A PRODUCT! I AM YOU!" Equally moving is bass player Mike Watt's journal, where he shows just how awestruck he felt to find himself playing in the Stooges.

There are none of the legendary Stooges stunts of yore here, like Iggy's peanut butter smeared, smeared glass chest ripping or wearing silver latex evening gloves—and definitely no bowling ball tossed from the crowd. But what happens on screen still makes you wish you had been part of the energy.

JOHN OSWALD
CHRONOPHOTIC: CINÉMA DE L'IMMOBILE/MOVING STILLS;
CENSUS: L'ARC D'APPARTITION
GMM DIFFUSION (DVD+CD)
BY MATTHEW FITCHIE

Though better known for his plunderphonic work and his recordings of *The Gentle Dead*, John Oswald's interest in replication and repetition extends beyond the realm of music into other experimental media. As *L'Arc D'Appartition*—a piece of "chronophotic art"—bings into relief, the hub of those various projects is not so much the questioning and subversion of copyright, but a growing concern with unconventional forms of time. Like this *Eno*, Oswald is a committed conceptualist: an interviewer with an interest in inventing new forms of experience. *Always* in the 1970s Oswald dreamed of dealing with sound in such a way that it could be handled and read like a postcard, laid out as a presence available for browsing. *L'Arc D'Appartition* (generated in response to a commission from a French-Canadian media company) eschews sound for image but taps on that same uncanny borderline between still-life and movement. Since the mid-90s he has become increasingly fascinated with the idea of a portrait which has credit, or an on-narrative film restricted to a certain kind of slowly generated movement. There is an influence here from computer screen savers,

but more distantly he appears to be working in a tradition that goes back to 19th-century interludes such as living sculptures or tableaux vivants.

Except for a "hidden" interview with Oswald about the piece, *L'Arc D'Appartition* is a wholly image-based construction for DVD whose central component is a portrait film—a frozen still-life image of 80 individuals who take into view in random groupings out of a white screen and then slowly disappear. Each figure may appear in a clothed or undressed state, and two or more figures may at times be mapped over each other in a kind of ghostly translucence. The images were generated by approaching people in the street in Québec and asking them if they would participate in a photo shoot with clothes on and off. Out of 120 portraits (two represent "cousins" and who include Oswald himself and some of the studio personnel), Oswald assembled his final frame of 80 to be immortalised in this very slowly shifting, minimalist spectacle. The coming and going of appearances continues ad infinitum and no two "performances" of the piece will be the same. A separate menu page assembles all the participants in a single multilayered crowd scene and starts to highlight one individual after another. Pressing "enter" on a remote will pause on that person and identify them by name. Other features, triggered by command keys, include loops of "still life" of Oswald's face, and that of producer Emily Moore, who stands fixedly out at the viewer. Each of these, in different ways, is a "moving still," a term that Oswald hopes to explore as a new genre.

It's an extremely curious product, one which leaves the viewer at a loss as to how to engage with it. Is it to play somewhere in the background of a living room, or might one be drawn into a preoccupation with it? More perplexing still is the neutrality and anonymity of the piece, combined with the sense of life and motion slowed to a near standstill. Oswald has linked the idea to those moments in films of the 40s and 50s where someone dies and the actor may throw their breath to give the impression of immobility. It is this kind of deathlike state that

softens the glossy group photo of everyday people here. On the one hand they are a kind of artistic elegy; on the other, they are transfixed in a perpetual purgatory of the image—a cinema of the immobile. The project took shape in the same decade that cytogenic freezing emerged as a possibility.

Whisperfield is a separate audio project, but packaged with *L'Arc D'Appartition* and obliquely linked in its people. Here Oswald has taken that idea of multiple participants in a static frame and translated it into layers of whispered voices. Whispering is an analogue to that point of immobility in the portrait: speech is reduced to something verging on silence. The voices are so hushed that at first it's not clear what language is being spoken. All that stands out is the tugging of lips and tongues, the patter of indistinct phonemes. As with *L'Arc D'Appartition*, single words are momentarily pulled into the foreground so that one catches fragments of their identity—"...was my mother's..." "...color..." "..."—but these little pieces of intimacy are constantly sinking back into the abstract field of the whole, and there's some kinship here with Morton Feldman's areas of spontaneity within a larger controlled process. Every so often all the speakers emerge into a total field of presence—the whisperfield—in which the human voice is reduced to a collective indistinct babble, abstract and serene as the rustling of leaves.

SHHH... SOUNDS IN SPACES
LONDON VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM
UK

BY BRIAN DILLON

In 1916, in a visionary and alarming tale entitled "The Moon King," Guillaume Apollinaire coigned up the ghost of Ludwig II of Bavaria. Entombed inside a mountain, the mad king strokes the keys of a fantastic musical instrument, drawing to his ears the sounds of the world above. "The flawless microphones of the king's device were set so as to bring into this underground the most distant sounds of terrestrial life," he noted.

Cross Platform



Expressway to yr screen: pills from Sonic Youth's *Corporate Chest* DVD

soaring of rural Japan, hissing geysers in New Zealand, the bustle of a Tibetan marketplace. Eventually, Ludwig awakes on a rolling current of sound and escapes his subterranean prison. Apollinaire's lunatic monarch could fittingly have presided over the V&A's sonic recreation of its own space, during which it sometimes seemed that the museum's artifacts, startled by insistent voices in the walls, might tunnel their way out into the Cromwell Road, summoned to surreal freedom.

It was the voices in Shiva, that set things most immediately into motion, voices that whisper, pump and tattle from headphones which usually infuse more extroverted guidance, but here leak down, vague instruction in the Chinese language. The voices are the voices of the voice of a young girl tracking, longingly, her favourite animal sculptures. She's already way ahead of this lecture, sketching an aural jungle around an audience who strain to discern the centurion's Colas, like some preternaturally sensitive hunter, had deeply slipped. Giffon Weaving ascends a double binding in the interior of the room, the room is a room with the pop and sigh of ancient floorboards. Weaving intimated several visitors to this room before she found its perfect soundcloud: the voice of a staff member whose childhood memories of a venetian prep school are clearly reconstituted in the wing, breathing voice of a transplanted room. The effect is a loss one of recognition that the wing time travel is a sonic space out of Wrentham.

In the East Room, Jane and Iqbal Wilson turn the V&A's most resonant space into a land of haunted playground. The East Room could be the scarlet-walled chamber of the museum, a melancholy chamber in which the plaster ghosts of massive stone objects lie about like so many forgotten toys. These chunks of classical, Celtic and Renaissance art were replicated in the 19th century; from here, the whole museum feels like a collection of scarified fossils. In this paradoxical space, the Wilsons add the sound of children playing on another abandoned fragment: the decaying concrete remains of archivist Victor Pissman's modernist Apollo Pavilion. Petrus D.

many chronologies collide here, so much cultural ambition and hubris is both mocked and celebrated by these voices, that I was unsurprised, on looking up at a distant corner of the room, to spot a huge patch of livid red paint peeling away the museum's skeleton showing through.

That all of the above – the most vocally anxious of the museum's interlocutors – are primarily visual artists, is a whispered hint as to the exhibition's less compelling virtues. Where artists seem to have read the show's brief – a single room and a sonic carte blanche – as an invitation to open the museum to its own strangeness, the musicians are too often content to add a bare punctuation. Their contributions are often merely stop or ethereal. David Byrne's stiff witticisms (a glare of mobile phones along a corridor, a very toilet funk), Elizabeth Fraser's conjured lullaby to the infant under the stairs, Conrad's off-kilter, incoherent rant for Glass Room, only Lolita's insistent address probe deeper, the voices of the nearby train from tube station to museum delivering ergonomic fragments of the outside ("She sent me a message...").

SONIC YOUTH
CORPORATE GHOST: THE
VIDEOS 1990-2002
JEFFREY GARDNER/008270461 DVD

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

De signing to Deffen records in 1990 to make their first major label release *Goa*. Some Youth were featured with a cash bonus intended to be used to make a series of video films to accompany the release. This was act of bounty appointment to stem from a realization that SY held some kind of key to the next great youth marketing area yet to be tapped: Grunge. The G-style infests a couple of the *permos* that are included on Corporate *Goa*, which spans another 11 tracks from *Goa*, three created around the follow-up *Drift* (1992), and tosses in a grab bag of more recent one-offs from subsequent albums right up to 2002's *Murphy Street*. Only "Kool Thrift" appears to have been designed to

inure it to, with its glib, gleaming coattails. Kim Gordon cooing to a fly and cameo from Chuck D. But even that wended out the station's conservative custodians: The rest of these phantom broadcasts allow us to see how SY's collaboration openness has extended into the filmic domain, with help from directors such as Todd Haynes, Spike Jonze, Richard Kern, Harmony Korine, Tama Cowie, Phil Morrison and Dave Markey. The DVD contains optional commentaries by the group to many of the cuts, which are largely blurring on how the docs were conceived and executed. Several feature additional commentaries from the relevant directors and occasionally bassist and frequent companion Mike Watt, whose musings have a habit of petering out as his mind seems to wander faster than his tongue.

The group claim "Dirty Doctors" is their favourite of the videos. It's set in a rock club, and as they lay into some fearsome licks, a sassy scenario develops in the moths as a hustler strolls in and cuts Granger off exchange meaningful looks. After yanking up on stage for a title presentation, the band's performance is interrupted as the crowd in a poignant slow-dance as the song breaks down into its dreamlike coda. This more conventionally styled narrative is the exception. Next up is "Irene (Sang For Kieren)", directed by visual artist Tony Gonsky, an associate of Mike Kelley. The group's tribute to the departed soul of Keren Caspary is illustrated with carefully primitive edgy effects such as a singing skull, a severed head, and a severed hand. The latter placed on top of a doll, and various lo-fi-barged artists on a blackened set that's a cross between the Children's Television Workshop and Coach Black Tapes. Todd Mayers' "Disappears" was the subject of some controversy when Tanna Davis re-edited his version (the director's out appears as a bonus), but as atmospheric mouth music is one of the band's trademarks, the video's use of sound-collapsing and hammering in an automobile while playing with enigmatic code wheels.

All the group members have a crack at directing or co-directing. Lee Ranaldo's *Provisional* work

she's a haunting luminosity to "Wow," Stone Shelley's abstract print on collaged calico white decorates "Mary-Chen," while in the commentary the members give each other beautifully about their motives and methods. Go found there on the camp of changing times and phrases, some of the more abstract vivid ones hooked to the collage, dreamlike aesthetics of their B0s work like Eric, Sister and Qagreen Nation, all jurots, sander footage of some days, collapsing buildings, day's color washes, lo-fi rehearsal takes. By the time of 1992's "South Asian: Fashan," they had emerged blinking in Bush (S) territory, with a feeling since that the (sig) Lolepalese generation needed more concrete statements, and the Nick Eng-directed out complements Thelma Moore's poems ("The president should have a war pig too.") with TV samples of the Ku Klux Klan, 1998 Persian riots, and other inflammatory sequences.

In the later '80s and into the early '21st century, *Some Youth* have retained their rock edge but, typically have moved back towards the hate of saginors of their early life, tempered with a wistfulness and sense of melancholy contemplation that betrays their maturity. Lee Ranaldo's video of "Heartbeat", from 1996's *A Thousand Leaves*, is typical of this mood – *Forgo-styles* sweeps from a car window of middle-America suburbia in snowy days, "Disconnection Notice" is an oddity with the music track submerged under a film of a youthful queer arguing in a tear win – you inevitably ask yourself, is the reconstruction of a genuine SJ argument or merely a playful subversion of the video as promotional tool? We shall, I suppose, never know.

These films won't take you any further out than the music already has, but are a valuable addendum to a familiar canon. The DVD indexing is awry in the second half: commentaries on a couple of tracks are inaccessible, one track ("Bill Is The Heather") seems to be missing entirely, and the final one cuts off prematurely. A "Bonus" section includes a handful of hilarious videos made by fans in response to a competition held by Geffen, plus interviews with Todd Haynes, a mini-documentary and more tidbits. □

The Inner Sleeve

Artwork selected this month by The Designers Republic's Ian Anderson



FAIRPORT CONVENTION UNHALFBRICKING

PHOTOGRAPH BY ERIC HAYES

I accept no hierarchy of influence. No best, no worst, I just like Unhalfbriking, here and now. And then it doesn't matter that I have no particular affinity with the music or that my choice yesterday would have been as different then as it will be tomorrow. That it's a photograph by Eric Hayes covering an album by Fairport Convention is not important, I'm interested in the work not the creator, the story

rather than the teller; unless I'm telling it, I don't buy the album at the time. The truth is, I was seduced by the cover long before I dated myself myself to the happy, naked, wall-sleeping pleasures of folk rock.

We met in David's Records in Blackwell where I hung out after school with Spangle's Propaganda, 10cc's How Deep You Lay, Led Zepplin's Presence and all the other covers I loved because they didn't look like other covers. Years on, I still don't see any value in designing something simply to be a record sleeve. I want to see good design applied to, not dictated by, format and I want to

experience work which does not approximate the popular misconception of The Designers Republic. I want to be surprised. Publicly I wish Unhalfbriking housed music I imagine like readers like myself might consider cooler, maybe the new One Man And His Laptop album; secretly I'm glad it doesn't.

It's special because it's as English as Margaret Ruthven's Miss Mapple and because a younger me imagined 'unhalfbriking' to be a psychological term more coined up with RD Laing than with garden architecture; try looking at it as an image of subconscious psychological

trauma in Middle England rather than a 'scene' outside Sandy Denny's family pile. I love it that the Convention are hiding in the narrative rather than being the subject, and I love it that these gentle folk out of winter coat provoke such a questioning response in me. 'Unhalfbriking', the album is that it portrays the opposite of my urban life, and represents something I keep out of reach – a typically English nostalgia for a past I never had. You see, the point is you're not seeing it how I do. Which is good. □
Ian Anderson is the founder of graphic design company The Designers Republic

Go To:

This month's cover boys Wilco and their record company WEA International was recently taken to court by UK experimental label **Indie-Discs** (www.indie-discs.com). Their crime? Sampling more than a minute of **Idol's The Conet Project: Recordings Of Shortwave Numbers Stations** (www.radiolab.com/conet). The sample appears on "Poor Pieces", a track on the Wilco's 2002 album *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*. The offending part, state **Idol** in a lawsuit, is taken from "Phonetic Alphabet Nuno", a track from the four CD set where a woman is heard monotonously repeating the words "benke, hobe, foxtrot". An out of court settlement followed.

Numbers stations are mysterious transmissions without any fixed frequency and with no regular

schedules, featuring voices reading seemingly random numbers and phrases in different languages. Especially prolific during the Cold War but still in operation, these broadcasts can be heard by anyone in possession of a shortwave radio. The 'Stations' do not exist officially, and the theory goes that the words and numbers being broadcast are codes corresponding to information passed between intelligence agencies. The Conet Project collects some of these transmissions into a curious package.

Simon Mason (www.simonmason-jazz.net) is author of *Secret Signals: The Enigma of Numbers Mystery*, and a major contributor to **Idol's** recordings. His site generously makes available lots of numbers station recordings, plus his book

on the subject, which is now out of print. There's also a wealth of video clips showing how to tune in to such stations and myriad links to related articles and the like for further exploration.

Blustade (www.blustade.com) is a multi-genre Webzine from Chicago. Especially obsessed with *The Sun City Girls* and *The Jesus Christ Saw Massacre*, the site contains a raft of reviews and articles (mostly by a Larry 'Fuzz O' Donnell), an interview with Gary Larson of *Dumb and Dumber*, and a bunch of live reports of shows in Chicago. Other artists warranting a mention are *Noxagt*, the late Angus McLeish (from whom they took their site's name), *Charalambides* and, ex *Fat Worm Of Error*.
ANNE HILDE NEESE



On Location

Live and kicking: festivals, concerts, events in the flesh





Facing page: Maja Ratkje (top), Richie Hawtin & Ricardo Villalobos at Sonar. Above left to right: Deadhead, Jaume Molins, and Ryuch Sakamoto with Pan Sonic and orchestra

SONAR 2004 BARCELONA VARIOUS VENUES

BY PHILIP SHEKOURIAN & DAVID STUBBS

Perhaps confronted with a slightly less cohesive—or at least, a less star-studded—line-up than in previous years, Sonar sent out a series of press releases in the weeks before the festival emphasizing one genre like HipHop and Techno. This is hardly a bad thing; it's good to see the festival attempting to contextualize its selections, especially as the crush of people attempting to get to a stage, any stage, sometimes leads to a kind of leveling whereby all entertainers are created equal.

But many of the most interesting moments fell well outside strict genre lines. The few hundred people who made their way to the cliff-top tent of the SonarLab for the Tegusushi showcase were treated to two hours of exquisite selections ranging from deep drums to uncommon funk-punk. Para's Tegusushi has largely built its reputation upon its unusual mixtures, releasing track classics from the likes of Material, Ginx & Mac Miller and Quidset, so it made sense that instead of playing its back catalogue, as so many labels do in the SonarLab DJ showcases, Tegusushi DJ Kim and Jaxon instead approached a definition of the Tegusushi sound by implication. Kim's hour ascended by means of half-dropping doses set over other drones and occasionally over programmed rhythms—at times, a raw, dirty house mix, at others, one of Noto's lively loop grooves discharging the mix from within. After her unsettling lullabies, Jaxon from Phil Niblock and Eastern-sounding home, Tegusushi co-operator Jaxon completed the connect the dots portrait of his label, beginning with Adrian Sherwood's impetuous electro funk from James Blood Ulmer's "Eye Level" and closing directly into Arthur Russell's "The Platform On The Ocean," Nick Drake's "River Man," and then My Bloody Valentine—a solemn course through airport tracks that still managed to surprise at every turn.

For the second year in a row, Sonar replaced the Thursday night rave with a show of high-concept high culture, this year featuring Ryuch Sakamoto, Fanzoo and Pan Sonic accompanied by a symphony orchestra. Unfortunately the fusion of aesthetics felt negligible, and what

resulted instead was the sound of an orchestra playing popular classics, from Baroque to John Adams, embellished by the pixel-wash of the laptop and electronic musicians. For one piece the tables were turned, as the orchestra performed an arrangement of one of Pan Sonic's own works, but to limited success. The Firm's filament-thin lead could barely hold the weight of the entire ensemble, which threatened to drag everything into a cauldron of ugly rhythm. As for Techno, this year's nighttime line-up presented Sonar's most adventurous selection of four to the floor since music in quite some time, beginning with Richie Hawtin's protégé Napsin, continuing with the Gaze infected, Detroit-influenced tracks of Tim Wright—one of the few UK producers to be doing anything of note with the genre these days—and ending with the collaboration of Richie Hawtin and Ricardo Villalobos, a significant twist on Hawtin's annual solo set. That the two Berlin residents have been spending more and more time together was apparent from the very start: Villalobos judged Hawtin towards deeper and deeper territory away from the main room banging that Windot. Canada's most famous export is known for, and towards a subtler, more nuanced vein of rapping beats, delivered cleverly, and weaving pleasure. Still, as they traded off, you could hear him roiling his signature tows—wild EQing, copious loops and applied effects, delay careening to the limits of control, threatening to send the whole thing off beat, before subsiding and letting the bass take over.

In the end, what united the two was less—perhaps, almost to the point of comedy, but effective nevertheless: Detroit's Matthew Dear followed the pair, in what surely must be his biggest billing yet, and his live laptop set made a hearty attempt to keep the 1000 plus crowd in thrill, but something was lacking, albeit almost imperceptibly as though the laptop, lacking the full sound of well-maintained vinyl and the extended flow of a crack CD, could not quite compete with the turntable's art and tested passages.

OCOB—the trio complex in which the Sonar festival resides during the daytime—at its modernist splendor in the series of Barcelona Surrounding terraces, bordered for several days by an incessant rain of techno, unveiled anti-Sonar banners from their balconies. This year's glitch keynote laundry plustered

everywhere of a hot-pinked, camera-wielding babe felt like a bizarre case of sexism masquerading as conceptualism and/or may Daytime Sonar has too many events for any audience to straddle completely. Beside a full daytime screening programme, the exhibition venue—SonarMeca—hosted First Universal Microstates, a four-ambassadorial show featuring conceptual notions such as State Of Sabotage (SOS), Leibach rekindled ASK and CM von Hauswirth's Kingdom Of England-Norland.

SonarMeca, meanwhile, the central venue of the daytime event, stands from the ruins of an old church floor. There are moments of apoplexy—the resonant glitch of DJ Rido—told across the Village arena on a blazoning sunny Thursday afternoon amid the sweat, acid, stench of dope, and catapulted you momentarily 50 years hence into an imaginary outdoor laptop.

While it's good that the lines between straight rave and abstract electronic are so porous at Sonar, the proximity of the venues is occasionally abusive. So Sweden's Henry Rylander found himself working with a smaller sound system in the SonarLab, with the more orthodox booming sounds of the main stage when censored. His set, a veritable symphony of running engines, ought to have been inspiring and awakening your synapses. Under these circumstances, however, it's a little underwhelming.

In the Sonar Lab, Pan Sonic generated formidable broadsides of cyclical industrial noise, with the odd catastrophic intervention as the factory floor gave way, leaving only a crater of dust. The Pan Sonic duo worked in semi-darkness and hope to distract from their unremovable onstage apparatuses by flanking themselves with large screens and the slightly shopworn device of abstract visuals which collapse, distend and convulse in sync with the music. Yet still, the numerous enclaves viddling the event found their comrades on the performers. Clearly the need for a human presence to be seen at the centre of even these musical operations can't quite be assuaged, fairly irrational as it is.

Quika Maja Ratkje, by contrast, performing at the Sonar Complex, cut a much more staid appearance in a lime green top darkly embroidered with the word "DESTROY." Despite the squalling, intense pitch of her electronic

concoctions, however, she didn't lapse into theatrics. What made her performance one of the most pleasing spectacles of the festival is her concentration and restraint, as if the noises she unleashed had myriad lives of their own and she had to prevent them from boiling over or burning out, keep them simmering and chinking. The contours of her set was a sustained avalanche of squabbling bristling, marianland made waves, unrelenting electronic gliss and flexed, serrated sound, which, with glen satisfaction, she brought slowly to a resolute close. That done, she rather sweetly took a bow.

Follow Norwegian Deadhead made a rare solo appearance at the same venue, like beard and general air of benign austerity were somewhat monastic. He sat at his keyboard as if composing luminous script. His performance drew occasionally from his recent bar CD set but unfortunately didn't reflect its range. At best his sounds loomed like distant warplanes, vast and glacial, like some transcriptions of old black and white Scandinavian meteorological photographs from the 60s, a storm that he didn't play about on his longer.

Argentina's Juana Molina, despite her pedigree as a mainstream TV entertainer, didn't quite do justice to herself here. She was beset with sound problems but generally the off-centre charm of her recent album translated here as tentative and wobbly. Still, she evidently built up a bank of goodwill and received a sympathetic hearing.

Mac Lunde was an inebriated delight. Outside, he didn't lose his cool but generously forfeited it. Wearing ridiculous yellow-limbed shades he didn't come across as an afternoon-snoozing buffoon, rather as someone indolently excited at the chance to perform, propelled by a deeply friendly urge to cut away any barrier or barrier between audience and artist. His songs still chop and change, are still impossibly malnourished clatterboxes of musical ideas, which he tosses away long before they're spent. Nowadays, however, he's discovered that if you stick with a groove for, say, 30 seconds, the crowd will love you for it. It's ironic, cabot cap fun—but God, with infinite courtesy closer to the set with a Saturday evening restraint that comforted the organisers, played havoc with the remainder of the evening's programme and brought Sonar to an undesirably damp conclusion. □

On Location



LE WEEKEND STINGING TOLBOOTH

BY NEIL COOPER

Almost midway between Glasgow and Edinburgh, Stirling is the ideal spot to meet no man's land for a festival like Le Weekend. Imbued with a loose-and-vibe, unlike the twin metropolises it straddles, it has no chips on its shoulder or snafu airs and graces, simply because it's neither here nor there. For seven years, such wonderful geographical incoherence has allowed Le Weekend space enough to breathe, and this year it stretched itself to four days.

It wasn't enough, however, for Deft's Markus Popp. Scheduled to perform with vocalists Enko Toots as So as a three-set exhibition in the neighbouring Changing Room gallery with lights blocked, Popp got to the departure lounge but turned around at the 11th hour and duly went home.

Such pique doesn't discourage Thursday's opening act, The Harriet Drake Trio, a split 'n' sawdust free collaboration between the Chicago postmodernist, veteran saxophonist Paul Dunham and bassist Paul Rogers. Drake may have been billed as leader, but in content to acquiesce to Dunham's grumbling bullfinch tenor and Rogers' seven string symphonic medieval

plackings, which at one surprising point bends its way into appealing approximations of analogues primitives.

Time itself ticked, however, compared to saxophone veterans Berbotomagus, whose tenor saxophone and FX onslaught from Don Dietrich and Jim Sauter means Donald Miller's spine but equally resulted in guitar for the ultimate threesome. With night aerobics appeal and an array of strap-on rubber hoses and plastic attachments, Sauter and Dietrich are a twin headed dervish forever in motion. In contrast, Miller sits with his guitar at a scarred overcast table, dropping weights on its neck like some sturmtrumpf Her Bear Band madman conjuring up equally deafening assaults.

When Dietrich drops a microphone into the bell of Sauter's sax, then pushes the two instruments together, so their bells are effectively kissing, there's a whiff of romantic intimacy only 25 years together can contrive. As Miller gets in on the act, forcing his guitar neck between them before falling backwards off his stool, the whitish physicality of the sound becomes a gloriously visual inebriated routine. Friday night's New Ward Anarcha showcase is by far the most enticing prospect. Heather Leigh Murray's solo improvisation for voice and podium steel guitar deconstructs her instrument's associations with dog-dad link-dink-dance. Fed up. Bathed in a crimson glow, Murray's contorted spinal shivers and gossamer call and response builds to beguilingly eerie western wind cadences that cool like leering enses wooing sailors home to shore. As she repeatedly slams

the flat of her hand down onto her guitar neck, Murray's altered state becomes the pulsing storm before an obdurate calm.

More homestead skamish bubble comes with The MV + EE Modcise Show. Matthew Valentine and Erik Delia's outburst of stripped bare blues. With the look of a hooded Peter Sellers and an equal feel for the ludicrous, Valentine's seven wretchedly one-sided by increasingly odder ukulele, banjo and harmonium that makes his Monroe deprived of operatics.

If MV + EE sound said as the mixed swart County band of John Roseman's Deliverance, Pelt's slow burning singing bowl and strings rage drives another the counterfactual spirit of Astorville more hilly country Zabriskie Point, a film where an altogether more metaphysical East/West alliance exploded out of the wilderness.

Saturday afternoon finds eight local musicians, plus Don Dietrich, working with composer Peter Dowling on the project Music For Buildings, a two hour jam, sampled live, then diffused throughout the Tolbooth's multi-banded space. Despite slides into pedestrian avant Baroque whimsy, something near monumental occurs, and at one point in the call an amplified guitar and violin loop appears to reinvent French nursery rhyme melodies.

Things quieten down for the evening session with Japanese vocalist Hizo, who performed her Ash In The Rainbow suite with cellist Hiroaki Sakamoto. Muted layers of sampled string textures portraying aldehyde Hizo's strident voice box manipulations make for high drama.

Already knowing her smile alone guarantees she's in possession of at least one parallel universe European winter, as Hizo's ends with a very Fast-But-Slow sort of weeping.

More code follows from Ernst Reijnders, whose System D project with vocalist Mola Sylla and percussionist Seigne Guéye is an ideal Fourth World journey soundtrack for a global village pop show. When Sylla and Reijnders pour the ashes, the sweetest of unperfected blossoms are invoked.

There's final night disappointment as, due to illness, Loris Mazzacane Connors, set to play with Suzanne Langille, cancels. At three hours notice, however, a heroic Glenn Jones fees in from Boston to save the day looking gloriously bewildered, he dedicates his set of delightfully muffled guitar pickups to the late John Fahey. Accompanied on one number by Pelt's Jack Rose on slide, instantly gives way to journeyman, each served with charming downhome humor.

Finally, New Zealand's The Dead C, in their first UK show, whip up a gleeful storm of relentless self destruction called from Bruce Russell and Michael Morley's sludge drenched twin guitars, Robbie Weir's pater who drum crier and a subtly sad and occasional emboldened tenor. Here is a group that thrives on mutual suspicion, and only when set lost confusion threatens implosion do they deign to acknowledge each other. As they find their bearings, out of the mists comes a thrilling purity that gets enough to define sound and place, a perfect, sudden full stop to a long but not lost weekend. □

Le Weekend: Berbotomagus, Glenn Jones with Jack Rose (top row); MV+EE Modcise Show, Pelt (middle row)

MUTEK (see bottom row); Candice Mizell, Joseph Sachs (left); Liekehaas/Burnt Friedman

MUTEK MONTREAL VARIOUS VENUES CANADA

BY PHILIP SHEPHERD

Shortly before he was to take the stage on the Sunday evening closing performance at MUTEK, Geoff White came walking through the crowd, white as an Alpo and looking like "Ave you OK?" I asked him "Not really," he said, and then pointed at the stage, where Burnt Friedman, Joe Liekehaas and Joseph Sachs were spinning delicate cat cradles of drums, durns and electronics, bawling musical threads into a form of sparkling clarity, despite its rhythmic complexity. "This is as close to perfection as music gets."

Admittedly Friedman et al were a hard act to follow, but Geoff White, who plays as Aorae, needn't have worried. His set of laptop bedded crinkles beats and isolated electronic guitar, accompanied on several tracks by Ben Kamen, shone on its own. The rhythms were slightly panther than on his recent Shroody CD, Witness Ash, and the infusion of live guitar lent jazz-inflected harmonies without lapsing into "instrument."

This was the fifth instalment of the annual Montreal festival, which showcases experimental digital music and minimalist House and Techno. The line-up ranged from the delirious 'n' crash of the

Roster Nator crew to the uncommonly deep duo House of Worldbeat. The Mile, who produced highlight after heady afterglow highlights, dividing this year between three venues — a theatre in the film centre Ex-Centris for experimental soundworks, the 2000 capacity Metropolis nightclub, and the boxy, camera-floored SAJ lounge — the five day festival felt like well organised cogent blocks of ideas.

There was the 'pop' night, featuring Juno Boys and Schneider TM (as well as live Techno deconstructors Smith H Black, who in a sequence of deep loops and live effects, undid everything that had come before them, turning the former artist's flowery electro-pop back into a heavily pruned line of spidery branches and rusty stabs). There was the evening of uncompromising sonic experimentation, featuring analogue aficionado David Kridlin, Pen Sonica's Julie Vassian, and the duo of Valentin's Pave (aka Peter Vetrov of Iva Galt) and New York videographer Johnny Decker. There was all-out, all-right dance party — had it been outside, you could have called it a rave — featuring a line-up of stellar House and Techno producers including Ego Checkins, Isane and The Rip-Off Artist, which concluded with Matthew Herbert spinning one of the most perfectly apropos DJ sets I've ever heard.

While more and more artists seem to come to

MUTEK prepared to break moulds and make bold statements, there were exceptions. The festival got off to an inauspicious start with a lackluster audio-visual performance from Montreal's Antman. On their own, his drones and glitches might have created some sort of atmosphere, but they were overshadowed by unnecessary visuals that fettered digital aesthetics without engaging in actual aesthetic work.

One of the most anticipated events of the week also disappointed. Richie Hawtin's first Platonium performance in nine years had been billed as an unprecedented multimedia extravaganza. But after a late start, with Minus Recorder's Clark Wainzling almost two hours of Ambient music, the Platonium live show was merely a faithful recreation of his classic Acid work, and the much touted visuals failed to work for more than half the show. When they did, they offered intriguing, even engrossing fusions of sound and vision, but they hardly announced a brave new realm of IV culture.

But as always, MUTEK remained a resource for discovery, showcasing talented developing artists who have yet to gain much of a foothold in an international context. Among them South African-born, London resident Portelle. Montreal's hip-hop minimalist techno provocateur Frukova, and the astonishing duo Skatiz Kogen, whose longform audio-visual performances

collaborate the lines between media, resulting in a kind of audiovisual art that unfolds everything you think you know about the relationship between moving pictures and sound. Oki's Digital Material practically stole the festival with a HiPop influenced set of frenetic, out and dance House and grooved vocals that had colleagues like Kikar and Koller frothing in the front row.

It's a good thing that Jamie Lidell was slated last, or there might have been no festival at all. In his hour or so of a cappella acrobatics — looped, processed, and occasionally relayed through a Marshall stack that gave his voice the quality of Heavy Metal guitars — veined from AM radio stylings to death-groove to an alleged Prince cover, creating to climax after climax, leaving the audience weakened and transfixed. When, toward the end of his set, he asked, "Who's not on the wheels of steel?" It was the funniest joke heard that week. For a DJ to attempt to follow Lidell's scorched earth soul would be sheer ludicrousness. Lidell's appearance was less a performance of music than pure performance; less expression than explosion. In an unusual move for MUTEK, there was no after-party. When Lidell brought the curtain down, figuratively speaking, it might feel like a leader alone. There was no question of further motion or further music. □



The Feedback Philarmonia (left to right): Alvin Lucier, Billy Rozie, Sarah Washington, Otomo Yoshihide, Kenton 'Fray' Benton, Toshimaru Nakamura

FEEDBACK: ORDER FROM NOISE

LONDON ST LUKE'S

UK

BY ILY MONTGOMERY

It seemed right that a concert dedicated to the anti-backstage phenomenon of feedback—born when the output goes into the input—should begin with its best moment. This came courtesy of the event's presiding genius, Alvin Lucier, whose experiments with audio have trodden an unenvying line between the artistic and the scientific since the mid-1960s: Lucier's precision sound work is highly sensitive to individual spaces and ambiances. The venue, the acoustically rich St Luke's Church, is an imposing space, and it looked more so in the fiftal evening light after a violent June downpour. Lucier entered sporting a jacket and he and two head-mounted microphones. He came and stood between the four level seats and the raked banks behind them. He hunched, moving eccentrically and looking, with his ample moustache, like a character who'd strayed from a

cartoon. The piece began: *Bird And Person Dying*, from the mid-1970s. The sound source is a toy bird emitting a high, descending tone followed by a yip of tweets. This is broadcast from two loudspeakers, picked up by the performer's headgear and sent back into the mix. As the performer moves, even slightly, the nature of the feedback changes. The result was extraordinary—the simple source sequence was soon berthed in a high-pitched feedback tone that modulated beautifully as Lucier peered slowly around the space. Beelings, dissonances and the instability of the main tone turned the resulting output into a complex flow of sounds that never quite rid itself of the banal comedy of the point of departure, the tweet.

This disarming simplicity of conception and execution was not reproduced in any of the evening's other performances, which came from warring permutations of Otomo Yoshihide, Toshimaru Nakamura, Nicolas Collins, Billy Rozie, Kenton 'Fray' Benton, Sarah Washington and Krist Aelfmann, the curator of the show. The one- and two-performer events stood out, while the larger

ensembles tended to merge into untidy squalls of electronic noise. Noise, though, was something that Otomo Yoshihide handled brilliantly on his own. His spot began with a violent jolt as he slammed a turntable needle down. His console DJ monosurms were loud and physically uncomfortable for the listener in a way that few performers anywhere could make as pleasurable. It was as if he was reminding everyone present that the whole venture raised domesticating the angry behemoth of feedback. Not in his case. Not in that of Nicolas Collins, either. His performance, heard to some passing a right hand with telephone taps attached to it over a tabletop guitar and other devices. It was gesturally powerful but musically underdramatic until, five minutes in, it erupted into lava-spewing technicolor notes bending, tones fuzzing into one another and curious harmonies bouncing off the walls. An immoderately strong piece.

The collaboration, in the second half of the concert, between Venetian video artist Billy Rozie and Toshimaru Nakamura was also strong, if less

intense. Between them they made music that sat delicate, sine-like tones off against rougher, choppy sounds. Rozie's lo-fi feedback video was a rare example of an appropriate improvised visual accompaniment to live performance. After the best of the three larger ensemble pieces, one which had fashioned noise for small sonic moves, Lucier returned to finish the show with *Music For Gamelan Instruments, Microphones, Amplifiers And Loudspeakers* from 1994. Four performers—Lucier, Washington, Benton and Aelfmann—each held bronze, bowl-like bananags over mounted microphones, producing a warm and resonant set of feedback tones. In front of them sat Yoshihide, Rozie and Nakamura, plinking away with little hammers at gendens (xylophone like instruments). The piece depended on the constantly changing play between the isolated, chiming tones of the hammer welders and the rich bed of warring feedback drones. It sat quite as stunning as *Dying*, either as a performance piece or as sound, it was utterly engaging nontheatrical. Lucier looked pleased. We dipped our feedback. □



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Blocking battle: Apres Twin at Oslo Jazz Festival

UK festivals

DISTRACTION WEEKENDER

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

Second annual weekend event featuring 17 acts from across the North East. Saturday is a post-rock day with Ganesmes, J Kewins, Meandthebirds, Witten From Negative, Peace Bunt At Sea, See My Sound, Black Flower, Lake Me and Lachrymose Dne (7 August), while Sunday showcases cutting edge electronic music from Cathode, Dressed In Wires, Last Defender Of The Dne True Waveform, Spoonbender, Sarsava, Aemal, Jella Kid, Die Cluttschenschen-feternous plus sound systems from Jazett*Fencer and Tears Of Abraham. Both days will feature multi screen video by Vls Reina Gltch. Newcastle The Quay, 7-8 August, Spm-midnight, 25/day, 0191 230 4474.

www.distractiommusic.co.uk

GREEN MAN FESTIVAL

HAY-ON-WYE

Weekend festival in leafy Welsh countryside with a folk feel featuring Four Tet, Alasdair Roberts, Colleen, Fefe Fubles, Wigwags, Adem, James Yorkston & The Athletes, Gwernharud, Jeonns Newsom, Scarfor, The Fence Collective and others. Hay-On-Wye Baskerville Hall, 21-22 August, www.thegreenmanfestival.co.uk

SUPERSONIC

BIRMINGHAM

Audiovisual festival that focuses on new experimental dance music. Friday night features Luke Vibert/Wiggen Christ, Cylob, Neil Landstrumm, Capsule Vs The Legendary House Of God (23), while Saturday has three stages with live performances from Señor Coconut And His Orchestra, Spektrum, DJ Scud, Chris Clark,

Paric DH, Zangarini, Panasonic, British Murder Boys, Christ, Keepe Vs Black Galaxy featuring Nicholas Bullen, Surgeon, Photobricks and many others as well as a film programme, exhibitions and record stalls. Birmingham Custard Factory 22-24 July, Fri £7 adv, Sat £18 adv, combined £23, 0121 248 2262, www.woghead.com, www.capsule.org.uk

International festivals

FESTIVAL INTERNACIONAL DE BENICASSIM

SPAIN

Four day mainstream music festival on eight stages featuring a number of interesting artists including Sean Wilson, Enlatizende Neobautas,

Kisswerk, Lou Reed, Love with Arthur Lee, Wm, Electrolate, Trevor Jackson, Richie Hawtin, Thomas Fehlmann, Mego label night featuring Tsjoko Noriko, Pita & Tina Front, COH and Sluts Lesa alongside a myriad of less, or progressive acts. Benicassim, 5-8 August, EUR 150, www.fiberfb.com

ISEA

ESTONIA, FINLAND & BALTIC SEA

The new media symposium focusing on electronic arts, music and technology takes place this year in the harbour cities of Helsinki and Tallinn and on a multi-venue cruiser ferry. A collaboration with Montblanc's MUTEK festival brings Akufen's Music For Pregnancy, Cockhouse, Skolitz, Koligen, Deadbeat and VJ Charles Kiel. Other featured artists include Felix Kubin and underwater soundscapes created by 2Lips and Roger The festival also showcases

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demonstrations of new technologies by the world's media labs including interactive films, installations and wearable technologies Helsinki and Tallinn various venues and cruiser ferry, 15-22 August, www.sea2004.net

JAZZ À MULHOUSE
FRANCE

Jazz and improvisation fest with Barry Gay, Co
Stroff Senter, Irene Schweizer & Pierre Feno,
Louis Sclater's Napels Walz, Vandermeer Five,
Conrad Bauer: The Thing with Joe McPhee,
Christine Wodroszka, Xu Fengda, Eugene
Chadbourne, Luc Ex, Andy Moor, Fred Van Hove
and others. Melhouse: 22-28 August, 00 33 3
8025 2332. www.melhouse.nl

JAZZ EM AGOSTO
PORTUGAL

Annual festival pushing the new jazz envelope.
New Orchestra directed by George Lewis (3),
Nuyor Sista directed by Peggy Lee Band (4), Francisco Hualde
Electroacoustic Quartet, The Thing (5), Otomo
Yoshitake's New Jazz Quartet featuring Mats
Guastalino, Günter Baby Sommer (6), Franz
Hautzinger Regenorchester XI, Martin Tétreault
Otomo Yoshitake, Arve Henriksen (7), Paul Cox
Orchestra, Phil Plimley & Lisle Ellis and Muno
Jesus-Santandreu (8). Lisbon Centro de Arte
Moderno, 3-8 August, 00 35 + 217 823 475,
www.lisboacontemporary.net

**MOR FESTIVAL
IRELAND**

Audiovisual adventures with Adams, Philip Jack, Cande Hawk, Umbrella Spokes, Sihlah Ballet featuring Radioactive Man, Debaser and others. Charlottesville Castle, Tullamore, County Offaly, 21-22 August, EUR 65 (including camping cost and booking fee). www.mofestival.com

NOISECAPE
NETHERLANDS

Second all day noiseathon housed in a squatted flight control tower at a former airport. Extreme performance from an international array of artists including Low-Bat, Jan Keller, Carsten Volmer, Goldhorn, Yotaka Makino, MC Kette And The Shining Sash, Soemmatik and others plus a

installation by Jasper Van Der Merde, The Hague
Ypenburg, 21 August, 4pm-5am.
jovan@resonance.tk

NORBERGFESTIVAL
SWEDEN

Swedish electronic music festival embracing a range of styles from Ambient to noise plus all the cats, dricks and beats in between. Artists include Fennesz, Starvørn Håken, Luke Vibert, Philip Jeck, Pele, DJ Food, Mike Harding and Donna Summer plus label showcases and a heavy accent on Scandinavian artists. Norberg, 29-31 July. www.norbergfestival.com

OSLO JAZZ FESTIVAL
NORWAY

Annual Old jazz boss featuring mainstream jazz and avant-garde sounds alike, spread over various venues in the Norwegian capital. The Big club space hosts a Smalltown Superjazz (see below) label launch night with The Thing, a park rock inspired jazz duo featuring Mats Gustafsson, Pål Nilsen-Løve and Ingoborg Hålen (12 August), an eclectic night featuring Chicago jazz giant Fred Anderson, eclectic avant funkies Spectrum and Four Tet (13), and a Saturday night blowout with Mats Gustafsson & Hamid Drake, Fred Anderson & Pål Nilsen-Løve, LCD Sound System and Mental Overdrive (14). Other highlights include a 1970s soul jazz night (featuring Aphex Twin, Lole Veltrop and Rasper) (Hasseli) plus Farmers Market and Nils Petter Molvær. A number of the events to be held at BM will be sponsored by The Wire. Old jazz venues: 9-15 August. www.olskiss.no

TRANSBAY SKRONKATHON BBQ
USA

Fourth annual summer barbecue featuring Berkeley's "accidental, unpracticed, non-standard music" practitioners. You bring the food, they provide the grill. This year's skinkers include Josh Allen & Damon Smith, Ad-hoc Microbial String Quartet, Beau Casey, Anar Chaudhary, Alexander Cort, & Olivier Harnett, Matt Dwygion, Ernesto Diaz-Infante, Tze Fajadien, & Nina Espar. Ghost in the House.

Philip Greenleaf, Scott Gresham-Lancaster, Greg Oster & Will Grant, Jim Ryan & Andrew Wishnusen's Taklamba, Skronkzet West, Moe Staiano & Vicky Grossi and thollem. Berkeley Th Jazz House, B August, 12:30-11pm, free, 001 510 849 8744. music.acme.com

Special events

THE DEATH OF NERO

UK
The Resonance Radio Orchestra presents a
saxophone orchestra, as part of the Shoreditch
Festival, with acts by Ed Rader, Adam Bonita,
Suzanne and De Quincy. Performers include
vocalists Viv Coningham, Kay J Grant, Martin
Singleton, Ali Tipping, and Adam Dean. Band
members Tom Basley, Ben Drew, Alfredo
Garcia, Max O'Steen, DJ 2 Tall and Chris
Wheeler. Glass madison engineers Kenton and Tom
Wallace. The performance will also be broadcast
live on Resonance 104.4 FM (with live streams
at www.resonancefm.org). London: Hoxton Hall,
1 August, 8pm, £5/£2.50, 020 7884 0060.

DEEP LISTENING RETREAT
1994

Compasser will be New York's 14th annual retreat and workshops in New York's Catskill Mountains. At the retreat Offsets – along with Icee and Heliose Gold – will guide participants through methods of listening and sound recording meditations, breath work, dream work, composition, visual arts, ritual, discussion and movement (1-7 August). The three workshops which follow the retreat are led by William Barron, who specialises in dogenpo, traditional and experimental music (8-12), Fern Hahn, who specialises in traditional and experimental shakuhachi, dance and interactive electronics (13-17), and Bob Bielecki, specialising in audio art and design (18-22). New York Big Indian Retreat Centre, 5800 retreat, \$400 per Indian retreat
001 848 338 5984,
www.deditions.com/offsets/index/retreat.html

HAFER TRIO

Three consecutive evenings of *Hofer* The activity following the Nearness Of Doings... events in June, described as "the only dance salon held this century so far". At the three events titled *If You Can't Fight, Get A Big Hat, I'd Forget My Head If It Wasn't Tied On*, and *Not Three Times 27 Years From Now* you can expect sound, light and actions from H3's always unpredictable Andrew McKeeze. London Roadside Sinner Theatre, 27-29 August, 8pm, £5 per evening and available from phonograph@photonet.co.uk, 020 7723 4400. www.hofernash.com/h3n

OPEN/CLOSE

Richard Crow and Ladia Farinoti present a celebration of the house that was home to The Institution of Rot. The exhibition will consist of small installations and works on CD/DVD by invited guests and visitors, including sound artists who have lived and worked within the house including The Heifer Trio, Adam Behman and Paul Obermayer. London: 109 Colbyn Street N4, 1-5 September, 12-6pm, free, 0781 459 2152, excuseattheinstitutiondemo.co.uk

SHHH...

UK
Live performance and DJ in the Victoria and Albert Museum with Keen Blechdom, Colleen, D Food, Max Tandra, Lilla and SFT London Victoria and Albert Museum, 27 August, 8.30-10pm, 020 7942 2211, shhh.vam.ac.uk

SUMMER JAZZ CYCLING TOUR

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18th edition of this one day festival allows
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Homburger, Dieter Manderscheid/Wailo's World,
Luc Ex & Fobles and many others. Groningen

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15 Aug
Spitz TV

Spontaneous

pop experimentation from
Now, awesome Japanese
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foirly noise synth from the
Analog Girl.

18 Aug

**Blurt + Miasma
& The Carousel
of Headless Horses**

26 years since
conception, Blurt's
frazzled & funky
sax-fuelled poeticism
is as inspiring as ever.



26 Aug

Bikini Atoll



The beautifully demanic
Bikini Atoll (Bella Union) take
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Kraftwerk at Benicassim (left); Stereolab warm up for Reading

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On stage

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Terre A La Lune with sounds recorded at the MIR
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performs a live score to *Godzilla Vs Hedorah* on
electronics and trombone, plus VJ Flicker and
Float Djs. Bristol The Cube Moxiplex, 30 July,
baroque/garden party 6pm, music 8pm, £6,
www.cubemoxiplex.com

BLURT + MIASMA & THE CAROUSEL OF HEADLESS HORSES

"As for Anarchy, it is for Blurt, a lie in the
boxset, a Boss view it hurts..." Performing poet
and saxophonist Ted Milton with a sax return to
stage with his British No Wave post-punk group,
London Spitz, 18 August, www.spitz.co.uk

COIL + GITHEAD

John Balance and 'Sleazy' Chriszopherson back
together for their unique brand of magic
saxophone. Supported by Githead, the new rock
group featuring Colin Newman of Wire fame,
Scanner and Malka Segal, London Ocean, 25
July, 7pm, £16.50, www.oxen.co.uk

DEERHOOF + TRENCHEER

Simmons creator Matt Green's favourite avant-
pop/rock artists grace the capital with another
opportunity to witness their energetic live shows.
London ICA, 18 August, 7:30pm, £8/£6, 020

7830 3647, www.ica.org.uk

DEREK BAILEY/MICK BECK/ PAUL HESSON

Quality improv meeting which will feature the
clipped abstraction of Bailey as guitar, Beck on
tenor saxophone and bassoon, and Hesson's
rolling percussion attack. Sheffield Grapes (20
August) and Leeds Adelphi (21)

CHARLIE HAOEN NEW LIBERATION

Orlando Coleman's boss player has reformed the
ensemble he put together in the 1960s with
Curtis Bley. The group now features Haden and
Bley along with players from New York's
contemporary jazz scene including Curtis Fowlkes
on trombone. Edinburgh Queens Hall, 2 August,
8pm, £21.50/£18, 0131 688 2019,
www.queenshalledinburgh.co.uk

LONDON IMPROVISORS' ORCHESTRA

Monthly showing for the capital's improvising
ensemble performing conductors and other
one-off, sponsored compositions. London Red
Rox Club, 1 August and every first Sunday of
the month, 8pm, £15/£10, 020 7263 7265

LOU REED

Only UK date on the rock 'n' roll animal's
European tour. London Hammermith Apollo, 17
August, £30, 020 8749 8660, www.loureed.org

NICEOISC + WE'RE BREAKING UP

Two outfits dealing in electronics and visuals --
one a New York duo, the other the project of
London's Madeline Rodgers who runs the Two
Thousand and Label, London Fortham, 22
August, 6pm-midnight, £8, 020 7812 8793,
www.twothousandandlabel.com,
www.londonimprov.com



SONIC YOUTH

The Famous Five on the UK leg of an ongoing
European tour. Glasgow Barrowlands (1
September) and London Brixton Academy (2)
www.sonyouth.com

STEREOLAB

The Anglo-French avant popsters play a warm-up
show for their Reading Festival appearance.
London Garage, 24 August, £12, 020 7607
1818, www.stereolab.co.uk

STREET LEVEL HIPHOP FORUM

Grossroots HipHop action. MCs/Rhys/SuperNova,
DJ Flip, J Aphetic & The Coming, DJ Morphing, DJ
Phi Life, Cypher, DJ L. Bounce, Shemless Kint,
Subversive Elements/GM Baby, The Unpeople,
Double Negative, United Vibrations. London
Cargo, 8 August, 6pm-midnight, £5/£5, 020
7739 3440, www.cargo-london.com

LUKE VIBERT/WAGON CHAIRS

A laptop set from the shapes/shifting electronic
perspectives. Edinburgh Bongo Club & Moray House
with - the DJ set (27 August) and London Dees
Central Event (29)

Club spaces

BACK IN YOUR TOWN

Spring Heel Jack's Ashley Wales and trumpet
player Ian R Watson convene this excellent
monthly improvisation series. This month's one-
off, all-star big band features Wales and Watson
with Lol Coulth, John Cason, John Edwards, Paul
Rutherford, Peter Flood, Peter Marsh and Rael
Vosloo. London Red Rose Club, 19 August and
every third Thursday of the month, 8-11pm,
£5/£3, 020 7263 7265

FREE FORM

New Manchester inspired music space. This month: Graham Clark's Improv String Quartet plus reads player Dave Jackson. Manchester Upstarts at the Briten's Protection, 5 August, 8:30-11pm. £3, 0161 226 6062, www.britens.com/freemform

GLOBAL HEADPUNK

Five fast-paced international beats. Bengali breakfast, African Rite Groove, French reggae and Brazilian drum 'n' bass from residents Jim Whelan, Sarveje Ray, Nelson Deliano and Spindrit. London Hefeb, 11 August and every second Wednesday of the month, 22.50/£2 or free before 10pm, 020 7613 4462, www.heferelek.com

HERBAL

Forward-looking groove sessions including Manual Propaganda's revolution dub, underground HipHop and nongate funk (4 August), Groove's drum 'n' bass with Groovetree, Flight, DJ SS and MC Rags (8), Global Head Funk's international cocktails (11), Hesse features new drum 'n' bass from Official Recordings (11), Heraklino's monthly leftfield night with the Shiro Sound System, Marty Skyles, Andrew Westhall and Rev Mile Speedwagon (20), London Herbal, 9pm, prices vary, 020 7613 4462, www.herbaluk.com

IDYLLKYWCY

This month's name for the Bohemian brothers! Informal ingrown and experimental music gathering. The programme features Michael Rodgers/Ross Lambert/Daniel Boban, Adam Behlman/Jones Luby/Paul Hood (2 August) and Alex Tackley/John Sudd/Weddy/Paul Taylor (16), London/Birmingham Centre, Mondays, 9pm, £4/£3, 07904 081409

MISO

Klangwerk's monthly night for new electronics features Ivan and Marco Blasser School For Girls Glasgow 13th Note Cafe, 7 August and every first Saturday of the month, 9pm-midnight, 0141 953 1636, www.13thnote.co.uk

www.klwerk.com

THE ORCHESTRA PIT

Eclectic to monthly adventurous music night featuring Ted Witten's sax 'n' vocal trio Blurt, Gaspo spit-off Mhama and The Carousel Of Headless Horses, plus a new solo performance from Alex Ward on guitar and voice. Please note the new venue for this event, London The Spot, 16 August, 7:30-11pm, £6, 020 7392 9032, www.theorchestrapit.com

OTHER MUSIC

Sheffield Improv promotes the Grace And Delate duo of Chris Cunniff on bass and Jonnie Dunn on circuit-bent electronics and thermistors analysed supported by the duo of Noah Phillips from the US on classical guitar and Mick Beck on reeds (Sheffield Over The Top, 4 August), and Derek Bailey/Mick Beck/Paul Hession (Sheffield Royal Society for the Blind, 20). www.dance-music.co.uk/othermusic.htm

RAY'S JAZZ AT FOYLES

Monthly session of free improvised music concerts in the relocated second shop and cafe continues with a new meeting of two strong players - Simon H Fell on double bass and Marcos Matos on cello. Ray's Jazz at Foyles, 26 August, 6pm, free, 020 7460 3205, www.foyles.com

UPGRADE & AFTERLIFE

New Cambridge night for experimental, improvised and DIY music links up with Dead Rat Orchestra's live folk and improv noise soundtrack, United's mix of guitar, electronics and vocals, and pda's 'handheld microsound duos and loops'. Cambridge CB2 Basement, 25 August, 8:30pm-midnight, £2, 01223 564728, www.upgradeandafterlife.co.uk

DJS

Mix and arts collective's audiovisual monthly features DJ Kitter play from Pinay G on recorder, melodica and pocket keyboard, Gace & Delate plus alternative DJ sets and video projections. London 261 Gallery, 11 August, 7:30-11:30pm, free, 020 7613 5676, www.BB.co.uk

Incoming

ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC 2004

Last September The Hox were hooked up with Chicago's Empty Bottle venue to present a five day festival of outsider sounds around the banner, *Adventures In Modern Music*. It was such a success that we are doing it again this year. As in 2003, the festival will be spread over five days and feature a stellar line up. Boom Rip, Octopus Aet Dimese/Franc Hastings/Keth Rowe and Leat/Carth John (22 September), Gt Of Gals, Scam, Lasse Marhaug and Dave Redford Thad (23), Beretomagus, Telefor To Ayle, Paul Nissae-Love & Ken Vandemark and The Once And Future Heads (24), Thomas Brinkmann, Signings, Keth Fullerton Whitman and Enhance (25), Ghent, Xu Xia, Resagt and Double Leopards (26). Chicago Empty Bottle, 22-26 September, www.emptybottle.com

GUELPH JAZZ FESTIVAL & COLLOQUIUM CANADA

Community powered international jazz and New Music festival which considers active debate a key part of the proceedings. Workshops, panel discussions and lectures mingle with performances on the street and in restaurants. This year features Archie Shepp with Roswell Rudd, Reggie Workman and Andrew Cyrille; Susie Barni Iro, Susieko Namikawa with William Parker and Harold Drake, Bob Ostertuch with Pierre Hildbert and Theo Blackman, Andrew Cyrille's Pieces Of Time with Don Moye, Joe Addy and Oyeleka Asante, Joan Dettorre & Joao Hina, Michel Lemerle & India Cooke; and many others. The keynote talk is by Archie Shepp. Guelph various venues, 8-12 September, 0519 763 4952, www.guelphjazzfestival.com

KLANGWALD

LATVIA

East European experimental music event featuring Keith Rowe, Karle Matthews, Radan,

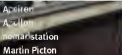
Fe-mall, Spunk, Carl Michael Von Hausseloff, plus local artists from Latvia and Lithuania and a film and video programme. Riga Theatre and Music Museum, 3-4 September, www.klankwaid.lv

SOUNDS LIKE NOW

Major celebration of New York's avant guard with Alan Luster, Robert Ashley, Jon Barham, George Lewis, Paul Winkler, Pauline Oliveros, Larry Jenkins, Nicolas Collins, Fred Formard, Mark Dresser, David Behnman, David Rosenboom, Lucinda Scharin, Anna Lockwood, Roscoe Mitchell, Michael J Schumacher, David First, Tam Hillman and others. New York La Malle and other venues, 14-17 October, www.interpretations.org

Out There items for the September issue should reach us by 30 July

D.O.R Motion + Time Tour



Apelien
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Modernisation
Martin Picton
Saturday 14th August 2004, commencing at 8:00pm. 12.00 On the heat. 0015 Performance Theaterfestival Rotterdam a' Rotterdamse 1 Netherlands

www.dor.co.uk/motion+time/tour
www.dor.co.uk

UK Radio

RESONANCE 104.4 FM (WWW.RESONANCEFM.COM)

The London Musician's Collective's music and arts station continues to set the pace for adventurous broadcasting in the UK. Highlights from the current schedule include Small Fish Records Show (Wednesdays, 2pm), A Black Music with Art Terry and Amber Dawn (Mondays, 5pm), Caricature Solid Steel (Mondays, 1am), Japanese new music in Onkyodo presented by Raul Hood (alternate Tuesdays, 8:30pm), Kleinschke present German sounds and space music (Wednesdays, 10pm), Fifty Fifty Sound System host a reggae and dub showcase (Wednesdays, 11:30pm), The Rough Trade Shop air new releases (Thursdays, noon), The Radiohead Music Show with Reg Hall (Thursdays, 2pm), These Records present the unprecendable Remains Triangle (Thursdays, midnight), Ed Present presents Sound Projecting (Fridays, 5:30pm), Peter Cusack's and Isabelle Clouet's environmental recordings show Verminshot Sounds

(alternate Fridays, 8:30pm), Negativland's extraordinary Over The Edge relayed live from KPFA in California (Saturdays, from 9pm), Conglomerate Music Hour (Saturdays, 1:30pm), Homes E Fyrie's current spot on shows (Saturdays, 6:30pm), Richard Thomas's radio art show Rascal (alternate Saturdays, 8pm), Dave Graham's Sound Pacts Exposed (Sundays, 6:15pm), Dan Wilson's home-made recordings show Halobone Show (Sundays, 10pm) and John Duncan's radio art show Crocod Raul (Sundays, 11:30pm). Other ongoing broadcasts include The Miner's Adventures in Modern Music (Thursdays, 9:30pm) and shows by our contributors Ben Watson (Out To Lunch, Wednesdays, 2pm), Savage Penet (diggers with Shuren Gai, Tuesdays, 5pm) and Mike Barnes (Scratching The Surface, alternate Tuesdays, 8:30pm). Broadcasts across Central London noon-1am, seven days a week with repeats broadcast outside these times. CD-quality Web streaming and full logs at www.resonancefm.com

BBC RADIO 1 97-99 FM

JOHN PEEL

Thursday 10pm-midnight

Leftfield music across the board

GILLES PETERSON

Thursday 10pm-midnight

Post-Ad jazz

BBC RADIO 3 90-93 FM

LATE JUNCTION

Monday 10:15-11:15 midnight

New Music compilation

JAZZ ON 3

Fridays 11:30pm-Late

Modern jazz in session and concert

HEAR AND NOW

Saturday 11pm-Late: New Music magazine

MIXING IT

Fridays 10:15-11:30pm

Hyper-edutic mix of avant sounds

BBC LANCASHIRE

85.5/103.9/104.5 FM, 855 MW

ON THE WIRE

Saturday 10pm-midnight The Minib's club columnist

Steve Barker mixes it up weekly

BBC MERSEYSIDE

95.8 FM, 1485 MW

PMS

Sunday midnight-2am Free-wheeling mix of avant sounds

CABLE RADIO 89.8 FM (MILTON KEYNES)

THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS

Fridays 10pm-midnight. Eclectic avant mix

JUICE 107.2 FM (BRIGHTON)

TOTALLY WIRED

Sunday 10pm-1am Leftfield new music

XFM 104.9 FM (LONDON)

FLO-MOTION

Sunday 10pm-midnight Leftfield electronica

Links to Net radio broadcasts can be found on The Wire Website www.thewire.co.uk

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issue is filled with in-depth coverage of the most radical and innovative musicians (past and present) in the arenas of electronic music, avant rock, HipHop, new jazz, noise, modern composition, traditional musics and beyond. You won't find this kind of informed mix anywhere else. Don't be without it.

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The *Wire Tapper* is a unique and ongoing series of CDs that are compiled by *The Wire* staff and given away to all our subscribers worldwide with selected issues of the magazine.

Each CD is designed to function as an accompaniment to the kind of wide-ranging mix of new underground music that gets featured in the pages of *The Wire* each month. Vols 1-5 and Vols 7, 8 and 11 are single CDs; Vols 6, 9 and 10 are double CDs.

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THE WIRE TAPPER 11



Seeing the Unseen: free to subscribers with issue 245 July 2004

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A fully searchable index of issues 100-203 is available at www.thewire.co.uk

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- [illegible]

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FIGURE 1. (continued)



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The album: Swell Henry

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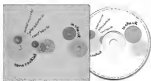
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Epiphanies

The careering popstones of PiL on TV derail Keith Moline's Prog rock ambitions



Conquered concertos (left to right): PiL's Keith Levene, John Lydon and Jon Woble

It's 'round midnight, September 1977, in the back of the family car. We're approaching the end of the three day journey from Madrid, the vibrant Spanish capital where I've lived for a few magical years, to our new home of Aldershot, a grimy no-horise town in the London commuter belt. I peer out into the Hampshire black. Rain streaks the side window. I'm only 11 years old, but I know that's it for my childhood idyll. The radio has been on for a while now, but I'm dozing, depressed. Until a nagging, hypnotic, triumphantly nasty guitar riff insinuates itself into my slumber, and I start to listen: it's the intro to The Sex Pistols' "Pretty Vacant".

That's where my epiphany starts. It's kind of a slow burner. It's as possible to have a slowburning epiphany. See, in this story I don't immediately become a pre-teen punk and start gabbing at traffic wardens. I see pictures of Johnny Rotten in NME and think he looks like an oaf (remember, this was way before he actually became one). On top of the stresses of my lifestyle upheaval, "Pretty Vacant" is an epiphany I'm not quite ready for.

I've spent those three exact years out from pop culture, developing an unhealthy interest in the Prog rock albums borrowed by my older brother from his friends, or more likely the older brothers of his friends. By the age of ten, untouched as I have been by successive pop crazes sweeping through Britain, my favourite group is King Crimson. In the eyes of my new English schoolmates, and quite possibly everyone else, this makes me some kind of pitiable freak. Over the first few months in Aldershot it becomes blindingly obvious that it's impossible for me to fit in. And so, like countless other playground misfits down the ages, I stop trying, convincing myself that I am different, that I am right and they are wrong, clinging to my Prog rock certainties like a musical security blanket, regularly chanting the stany: pop is pop, disco sucks and punks can't play their instruments. Except for that bit at the beginning of "Pretty Vacant".

I fall in with some other misfits and coerce them into forming a succession of bedroom groups with names

like Erosion and Blue Stratos (the latter named after the pubescent boy's after shave of choice). We bait together all the clunking stuff we can come up with to form 20 minute epics of breathtaking awfulness, with loud sections called "The Battle" and slow bits called "The Aftermath". We get fairly competent – indeed, our lead guitarist Rashid (13) remains to this day the fastest I've ever heard, making John McLaughlin sound like Taku "Slowhand" Sugimoto – and my God are we insufferably smug. We are utterly dismissive of 'commercial', 'unoriginal', 'simple' music, the kind of thing that 'anybody can do'. But still, the memory of the strange, insidious violence of "Pretty Vacant" nags away at me.

Being labelled 'weird' acts as a subconscious spur for me to seek out 'weird music', which leads me inevitably to Brian Eno. Blue Stratos are divided as to his merits. On the plus side, he's made records with Robert Fripp and has people like Pery Jones and Phil Collins on his albums. Less encouragingly, he wears feather boas and calls himself a "non-musician". Another key recording is Henry Cow's side of the Greasy Trunkers collection, our first exposure to free improv, which we agree is unlistenable, yet which I keep listening to, full of questions – is this 'simple'? Can 'anybody' do it? I insist on sandwiching a similarly wild interlude between "The Battle" and "The Aftermath", which the group dub "The Wank". The tablets of stone on which are carved the commandments of Prog rock are starting to crumble. In my head, "Pretty Vacant" is sounding more insistent now.

And then the real epiphany happens. Johnny Rotten has laid the groundwork, but it's John Lydon who supplies the killer blow. PiL appear on TV's Old Grey Whistle Test, and the ragging voice of doubt he first planted with "Pretty Vacant" becomes an utterly convincing call to arms on the group's incredible versions of "Poptones" and "Careening". Jon Woble's distorted dub bass stokes the massive spaces and waste by Keith Levene's scything guitar figures and synthesizer walls. Lydon's distressed cry and harrowing wail – the line "I'll never forget the

impression you made/You left a hole in the back of my head" is apparently delivered by a naked corpse in a forest – is so alien and compelling that I'm left staring at the screen in black-jawed amazement. It's all so messy and confrontational. Levene openly brandishes the manual for his synth, parading his lack of ability with gleeful relish. This isn't like Eno, that's for sure, with his obvious compositional prowess masquerading as non-musicianship. Nor a Henry Cow improv, non-music played by people of immense technical skill. It's even beyond punk, which to my ears is just condensed Heavy Metal played high and tight. PiL are loose, sprawling, so startlingly wrong, but possessed of an originality that goes far beyond what I've previously understood by the word. Sure, King Crimson are original in that they don't sound like The Jam, in fact they can't even sound like Yes or National Health or any of my other Prog faves. But PiL barely sound like music at all. Later I'm on the phone to Rashid, breathless with excitement – did you see it, did you see it? – but he can only reply: that guitarist was so SLOW.

It was all epiphanies after that. Now the floodgates were open, every month brought new discoveries: the choked electronics of Cabaret Voltaire, the spiky bonfire of Anton Webern, the infernal ecstasies of John Coltrane, each discovery accompanied by a year zero vinyl cut that brings tears to my eyes to think about today. The offhand strangeness of PiL gave me a taste for a particular kind of experimental grain in music, and inspired me to investigate other leftfield arts and ideologies.

But epiphanies can have their downside. Apart from the great albums lost to the record and tape exchange – what wouldn't I give to get back any copy of Egg's avant-Canterbury classic *The Polite Force* – I stopped bothering to develop my musical chops, favouring instead a Levene-like sloppiness that I've yet to lose (as anyone who has heard me play recently will no doubt confirm). Worst of all, fired up as I was with revolutionary anti-Prog zeal, I was summarily and unceremoniously kicked out of Blue Stratos. □ Keith Moline is one of Two Pale Boys

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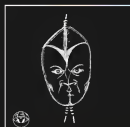
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